











PLAIN SERMONS,

BY

CONTRIBUTORS

TO THE

“TRACTS FOR THE TIMES.”

“ We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

“ For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.”—2 COR. xiii. 8, 9.

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CONTENTS.

SERMON	PAGE
CCLXXV. The Christian Name	3
CCLXXVI. Godfathers and Godmothers in Baptism	12
CCLXXVII. A Member of Christ	20
CCLXXVIII. A Child of God	29
CCLXXIX. An Inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven	38
CCLXXX. The World, the Flesh, and the Devil	47
CCLXXXI. All the Articles of the Christian Faith	55
CCLXXXII. God's Holy Will and Commandments	64
CCLXXXIII. God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth	73
CCLXXXIV. Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord	82
CCLXXXV. Conceived by the Holy Ghost: Born of the Virgin Mary	91
CCLXXXVI. Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was Crucified	102
CCLXXXVII. Dead and Buried	111
CCLXXXVIII. He descended into Hell	120
CCLXXXIX. He rose again from the Dead	131
CCXC. He ascended into Heaven	140
CCXCI. Sitteth at the right hand of God	148
CCXCII. He shall come to judge the Quick and the Dead	157
CCXCIII. I believe in the Holy Ghost	167
CCXCIV. The Holy Catholic Church	177
CCXCV. The Communion of Saints	186

Creed

SERMON	PAGE
CCXCVI. The Forgiveness of Sins	196
CCXCVII. The Resurrection of the Body	205
CCXCVIII. The Life Everlasting	213
CCXCIX. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost	221
CCC. The Ten Commandments	231
CCCI. The First Commandment	240
CCCII. The Second Commandment	248
CCCIII. The Third Commandment	258
CCCIV. The Fourth Commandment	267
CCCV. The Fifth Commandment	277
CCCVI. The Sixth Commandment	287
CCCVII. The Seventh Commandment	295
CCCVIII. The Eighth Commandment	305
CCCIX. The Ninth Commandment	315
CCCX. The Tenth Commandment	324

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Sermons to be contained in the present volume will differ from those in the preceding, and perhaps might come more properly under the name of Catechetical Lectures. For although they have been preached as Sermons, they consist, for the most part, of what had been brought forward in catechizing children after the Second Lesson ; being, in fact, but a recapitulation or summary of those points which had been by question and answer elicited from the Catechumens, who were of course previously prepared for the purpose. The object of this practice has been to impress more fully, not only on the children, but likewise on the congregation at large, the previous Catechetical instruction ; and in some cases it has served the purpose of drawing out the whole subject more clearly in all its proportions and bearings, as it existed in the Catechist's mind ; sometimes, it may be, of merely recalling to mind points that may have been dwelt upon more at length, and educed with greater interest from the children ; at other times it may have the effect of correcting any incidental mistake or misapprehension to which extemporaneous instruction is liable.

These will therefore be found to differ from the ordinary Sermons in this publication, as consisting not so much of deductions drawn from a particular passage, or

from the general tenor of Scripture, as of an accumulation of direct texts and Scriptural illustrations in confirmation of some fundamental point of doctrine ; such being found the best means of instructing the Catechumens, by means of the histories, examples, or precepts found throughout the Old and New Testament ; or in exercising their attention on passages previously committed to memory. It has, therefore, been thought desirable to notice such Texts at the foot of the page, in order that they may thus furnish at once to the eye subjects of Catechizing ; the shaping of the questions themselves being left to the discretion of the Catechist : such a method of suggestion seems in many respects preferable to that of supplying a given form of express question and answer. And the ranging of the Scriptural instruction under the points of the Catechism as the Text-book seems, of course, the most legitimate and natural mode of education.

Thus much has been said both to suggest the use to which they may be applied by persons engaged in teaching, and as explaining the method which has been long pursued by several contributors to these Sermons. The present series are, indeed, comparatively of but a very ephemeral character, but they will be found to answer the term of "*Plain Sermons*," and, it is to be hoped, may not be without their use in the present decayed condition of the Church.

It may be as well to take this opportunity of mentioning, that the profits arising from the sale of these Sermons are given towards the restoration and repair of Chancels.

Dec. 12, 1846.

SERMON CCLXXV.

THE CHRISTIAN NAME.

ISAIAH lxii. 2.

“Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.”

WE find in Holy Scripture that great importance is attached to the giving of a name; sometimes in the case of a whole people, as where it is said of Christians, that they shall have the name of GOD and of CHRIST written upon them¹; and of the Church; that it shall be called the “city of righteousness²,” “My delight” (Hephzibah), or one “married” unto me (Beulah)³. But this is more remarkable in the case of individuals to whom we find that GOD often gives a name in an especial manner; and where very great consequences are attributed to this circumstance. Thus, with regard to CHRIST HIMSELF, His Names are all given from Heaven; the Angel appears to Joseph to say, that His Name is to be called “JESUS,” or SAVIOUR⁴; and the Evangelical Prophet, long before, that HE should be called “IMMANUEL,” or GOD with us⁵; nor is HE ever called by any Name but that which is given by GOD HIMSELF. In like manner, when persons were taken into covenant with GOD, GOD HIMSELF gave them a name, as the name of Israel given to Jacob⁶; or changed their names, so as to be His own, with a new meaning, as was the case with Abraham and Sarah⁷. And Isaac, the child of

¹ Rev. iii. 12.

² Isa. i. 26.

³ Isa. lxii. 4.

⁴ Matt. i. 21.

⁵ Isa. vii. 14.

⁶ Gen. xxxii. 28.

⁷ Gen. xvii. 5. 15.

promise, was so named by GOD HIMSELF before his birth⁸. And in other cases where the parents gave the name, the circumstance of their giving the name, and the meaning of it, is expressly recorded in Holy Scripture; as if that also were done by the overruling power and controul of God: and the name is often such as to be afterwards fulfilled in their history; as that of Noah, and of Joshua, and many others. And afterwards a new and sacred character was given to this by the name being always given at the solemn rite of Circumcision on the eighth day; this, we know, is particularly recorded with regard to CHRIST HIMSELF, and also of John the Baptist, whose name was given on that occasion by a miraculous interference—by the faith of the father loosing his tongue, and confirming the name which his mother had mentioned, as if by inspiration of God, and which the Angel had before declared to his father⁹. For the mother said his name should be John, which she could not have learned from her husband, as he was dumb; and which appears from the surprise it occasioned. And from hence also at Baptism, not only is the Name of God, or the Ever-blessed Trinity, put upon us with a mysterious power, and we are taken, as it were, into that Name which is a Tower of strength: but “a new name” is placed on each one of us; not by natural parents from whom the child derives what is called his “surname,” his name as being a citizen of this world; but a name given by Godfathers and Godmothers, *i. e.* by the Church, for whom they stand as the child’s sureties,—his Christian name, that by which he is made a citizen of Heaven, is enrolled in the Heavenly Jerusalem, the new name which is written in the Book of life. This name is given, therefore, by his God-parents, or parents in God, because it is the name given him, as it were, by GOD HIMSELF through His Church. For surely if they of old received a name from GOD HIMSELF, as children of promise, and as belonging to the earthly Jerusalem, much more may it be said of them who are taken into “the Church of the firstborn, which are written in Heaven¹,” “thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.”

And now there may be mentioned two points which seem to

⁸ Gen. xvii. 19.

⁹ Luke i. 13. 60.

¹ Heb. xii. 23.

be implied in this circumstance of the ALMIGHTY GOD HIMSELF, our MAKER and SAVIOUR, giving us each a name. In the first place, it seems to imply that all our existence and future condition is ordained and appointed of GOD; for in all those cases where GOD gave a name in the Bible, that name has some reference to what the person was afterwards to be, either in himself or in his posterity; as showing us thereby that there is nothing whatever respecting us, but what is most intimately and thoroughly known to ALMIGHTY GOD. We find it very often stated in Holy Scripture, that certain events took place in order that it might be fulfilled which had been beforehand spoken by the Prophet; whereby, through all the history of CHRIST, and in all the things that were done to HIM, GOD takes pains, as it were, to remind us therein that His controuling Hand was present; as if this were the great point, that HE would have us in faith to remember and consider at every step. Now it seems to be something of this kind which is often signified in GOD's giving a name, to show not only that we are His, but that every thing respecting us is His also; all our future life is in His eye, direction, and knowledge. And HE shows us this His fatherly providence, by telling us beforehand that HE knows what is going to take place, even it may be before we were born. All this is strongly shown by His giving a name, sometimes before birth, sometimes immediately after birth, sometimes on entering into a new covenant with HIM: it is the same which is sometimes expressed by GOD's own declaration: as, to the Prophet Jeremiah, "The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations²." The same was stated, also, respecting John the Baptist: "He shall be filled with the HOLY GHOST even from his mother's womb³." And St. Paul also states it of himself: "It pleased GOD Who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace to reveal His Son in me⁴." But the same thing was done when Noah had the name which signified "rest" or "comfort," because he should afford rest and comfort in the destruction of the world⁵; or when Peter was thus named the

² Jer. i. 4, 5.³ Luke i. 15.⁴ Gal. i. 15.⁵ Gen. v. 29.

Rock, as about to have that faith on which the Church should be built; or when Judah had that name given him, because his brethren should praise him ⁶, and his mother should praise God ⁷; in that CHRIST should be born of him.

But there is another circumstance which is also signified in GOD HIMSELF giving to each of us a name—inasmuch as it sets forth, in the strongest manner, His own singular love and fatherly affection for each of us in particular: teaching each one of us singly that we are the especial object of His peculiar care. Thus, of the good Shepherd CHRIST HIMSELF says: “He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out ⁸.” And the Psalmist says, in like manner, of the stars, HE “calleth them all by their names ⁹,” which words imply His own very intimate knowledge of each—even as some great earthly king, when calling persons by their name, shows that he has not forgotten them, that they are thought of by him ¹. And thus, in the Prophet Isaiah, when God had called Cyrus, the king of Persia, by name long before he was born, this is mentioned as a pledge and proof that God would go before him and be with him. “I will give thee the hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel ².” And to Moses ³ God says, “Thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name.” And to Israel, also, the same is mentioned as the strongest proof which faith could have to rely on of God’s especial protection: “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ⁴.” Thus, often in Holy Scripture GOD would express how very near and dear to HIM any of His children are by calling them by name. And this was shown, in some remarkable instances, by our Blessed LORD HIMSELF with respect to those who were the objects of His particular regard upon earth. Thus, when HE first arose from the dead, and appeared unto Mary Magdalene, and spoke to her, she did not recognize HIM, but answered HIM as if HE had been the gardener, until CHRIST mentioned her name, saying, “Mary!” then she at once fully recognized the Good SHEPHERD Who

⁶ Gen. xlix. 8.

⁷ Gen. xxix. 35.

⁸ John x. 3.

⁹ Ps. cxlvii. 4.

¹ Esther ii. 14.

² Isa. xlv. 3.

³ Exod. xxxiii. 12. 17.

⁴ Isa. xliii. 1, 2.

knows His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. No doubt, in our LORD's manner of expressing that word was contained so much affection and intimate knowledge, that His pronouncing but her name alone contained more than many words could have explained; and she was overwhelmed thereby with surprise, and adoration, and love. In like manner, we find that our LORD in speaking to others, makes use of their name with a great deal of force and meaning, sometimes of affectionate reproof and warning—but always as implying some peculiar nearness and affection which HE bore to the person; thus HE says; “Simon, sleepest *thou*? couldst not *thou* watch one hour⁵?” and even to the traitor Judas with the same force, “Judas, betrayest thou the SON of MAN with a kiss⁶?” and Thomas also HE addresses by name on receiving him into His favour, “Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed⁷.”

Now all these things are such as have taken place upon earth, but they have a bearing and signification with regard to things Heavenly; the name which is given to each one of us by GOD HIMSELF, is a name that is written in Heaven. It has a reference to that time of which our LORD speaks when the great and good SHEPHERD of the sheep shall appear, and shall know His own sheep by name, of which HE says, “I will not blot out his name out of the Book of life, but I will confess his name before My FATHER, and before His angels⁸.” Here our LORD speaks of the name as already given, already written in the Book of life; and at what other time can that be done but at Baptism? when we are said to be “called” and “chosen,” to be made “children of God” and “heirs of Heaven;” yet so called and chosen as that we may fall away, and the name once written in the Book may afterwards be blotted out.

But now what are we taught, what great practical lesson may we derive from this circumstance, set at the very front and first threshold of the Catechism—that we have each one of us a name given, not merely by our natural parents at birth, but by GOD HIMSELF at Baptism; given by those who pledge themselves in the Name of GOD that we shall be His faithful children? We

⁵ Mark xiv. 37.

⁶ Luke xxii. 43.

⁷ John xx. 29.

⁸ Rev. iii. 5.

are taught that when admitted into CHRIST's family, and made one out of the many members of which the Body of CHRIST is composed, yet we stand each one of us singly and individually before GOD; each one is thrown entirely upon himself in his trial for eternity. It is not now, as it was of old, the trial of a whole nation or people as chosen of GOD, but in His Church it is especially the trial of each one separately; and for this purpose GOD sets upon each one His mark, His own sacred name. It adds a new and Christian sense to what HE said of old, "I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine:" and in furtherance of which HE proceeds with that mysterious promise, "when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee;" "when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned."

This Christian Name is a pledge to each one that GOD takes him into His peculiar care as His own child by Baptism, as if there were none else but he, that HE sets His love upon him; and intimately knows all that shall befall him both in time and in eternity; that HE controuls and disposes all things respecting him; that HE knows his disposition intimately well; and all the temptations he will meet with, and how he might, and ought to bear them; HE knows our substance yet being imperfect while it is being fashioned here beneath in the earth, and moulded by His grace until fit for Heaven; and in His book are all our members—the members of our new and regenerate being in His book are written.

Now when we look back upon the Saints in either the Old or the New Testament, which received names in some way from GOD, we find how especially their lives and fortunes corresponded with those names, and fulfilled the prophecy and predestination of GOD: but they themselves, in the times that they lived and during their own lives, could not at all see this as we now do. They, for instance, at that time, could not altogether understand how, *e.g.* Joshua set forth GOD the SAVIOUR of His people, or how Peter, who on so many occasions shook like a reed before the wind, should nevertheless become at last even as the Rock from his faith in CHRIST; but we all see these things now as they could not. Much more is it the case that we Christians cannot now in any way know the meaning of the Name which GOD

gives us, for it has regard to things heavenly and unseen, which we cannot know in the body. It is sufficient for us at present that our Christian name, whatever it be, marks us now as belonging to CHRIST, as one of the sheep which HE knows by name, and the object of His most watchful care. All the secret providences of GOD respecting ourselves we cannot know at present; but we shall know hereafter, if we be found worthy: but even now every one, from time to time, must have some faint glimpses of GOD's fatherly superintendence and merciful providences with respect to himself, such as no one else can know but himself. And this seems to be alluded to in that account of the New Name which CHRIST shall give him, together with that hidden Manna, which is the Unspeakable love of GOD. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna;" and "I will give him," it is said, "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it⁹." As Abraham, and as Israel, and as St. Peter had new names on entering into covenant with GOD, so they that are accepted of HIM have a new name which the world understands not. When the eye shall be opened to see and know GOD, then we shall at the same time see and know all His gracious dealings with us throughout, in drawing us by degrees more and more near unto HIMSELF, through difficult and winding ways which we know not of. Even in this dark world of ours, where we know so little of GOD's ways, yet if any one has become very remarkable as a great and good man, people are inclined to notice all that can be remembered of him when he was first born, or but a child; because we naturally suppose that even then GOD may have shown manifest tokens of His Hand, if man had but the wit and power to trace and find it out. But, knowing this, they catch at every intimation of it.

Would that we might be led by this circumstance,—of GOD HIMSELF giving us a name, even as HE did all His Saints of old;—that we might be induced every one for himself to remember, notice, and consider how every thing that happens to him each day is known and appointed of GOD; so as to commit his whole life and being into His fatherly hands. That we are not our

⁹ Rev. ii. 17.

own, but that we thus entirely belong unto God, Who has made us anew and chosen us out of the world into His kingdom, this is the first thing that we are taught by the very name which is given us; it is the last thing we come to learn—practically to know and consider it so as to be altogether as if we were His, in that temper of perfect resignation which is made up of fear and love. Would that we were ready to seize every opportunity of good and every thought of good, and act up to the same; taking such as instructions from ALMIGHTY GOD that HE is indeed thereby leading us on to HIMSELF, that HE is fulfilling in us, and we, by HIM, are fulfilling in ourselves, all His good will towards us; so that as HE, through His Minister, called us by our name when HE took us up into His arms at Baptism, so also even now HE knows us by name; and that HE will call us again by our name when we rise from the grave, as He called Lazarus of old: and when we are risen, that HE will not have blotted our name out of His book, but will confess our name before His FATHER and the holy Angels.

A few words more in conclusion. Great pains were taken, a few years ago, by the State, and much care is often shown by families and individuals, that their names should be rightly registered—should be written down in the parish books, and thereby kept safe, in the surest custody: for otherwise, if these names were by any neglect to be lost from the register, it might be inconvenient to them hereafter: it is very possible that they might suffer some loss from such an omission; property might be left them, and they might have a difficulty to prove their claim to it. So that the mere chance of such a contingency has made the State very careful, and almost every one anxious, that his name should be duly registered and preserved in the parish books.

Would that there were any thing like the same care and anxiety shown that our names might be written and preserved in that Book which is written in Heaven; so that we might not find at last that our names had been lost from that Book, and our Heavenly inheritance for ever forfeited thereby.

How much wiser are the children of this world in their generation than the children of light; nay, the more wise we are in this world, the less wise men usually are with regard to that which is

eternal; and those who of late years have been most anxious to have names registered in earthly books, have been the least mindful of our Christian name, of Baptism, and our Heavenly inheritance. O that men would but consider how every deadly sin puts a blot on their name in that Book, which nothing but tears can again efface! O that many among us could but know how fast their name is fading away out of that Book in which it was once written by the finger of God! Now none of us can be sure that it is not so in his own case; that his name is not already very much effaced out of that Book: this is a great reason for humiliation to us all: he who least of all fears this has most reason to fear it; he who fears most lest he should find it so is the most safe. None of us, I say, can be sure how much it may be so in his own case, when he considers how many talents have been entrusted to him, and how little use he has made of them: of one thing only can we be sure, that CHRIST will always be in truth what His Name signifies; HE is always IMMANUEL, *i. e.* GOD with us; HE is always JESUS, *i. e.* GOD the SAVIOUR. May HE ever be so to us! may we know HIM as such, and be known of HIM, in the second regeneration of soul and body on the Great Day!

SERMON CCLXXVI.

GODFATHERS AND GODMOTHERS IN BAPTISM.

PSALM xxxviii. 15.

“Thou shalt answer for me, O LORD my GOD.”

THESE words of the Psalmist are spoken by him after a confession that he was like “a deaf man that heard not, and as one that is dumb who doth not open his mouth.” The passage, therefore, may be applied to represent the helpless state of Infants, and the provision which God has so graciously made for them in His Church, in bringing them to Holy Baptism, and there answering for them by means of sureties, or parents in God. For as it is the little children that CHRIST invites unto HIMSELF with such express welcome, it may be well asked how are such to come to HIM unless they are brought by others? there must be some to bring them, and they must be brought in faith. What a merciful dispensation, then, would it be, could we have reason to think that the faith of those who thus bring them, might be accepted in behalf of those who can neither come of themselves, nor answer for themselves when brought; and yet seem to lie before us as especial objects of compassion, at that tender age when the tears and cries with which Adam’s sinful offspring begin the world seem to ask for the help of man and for God’s mercy.

“They promised and vowed,” says the Catechism of Godfathers and Godmothers, “in my name,”—not in their own name, for that they did at their own Baptism; nor do they promise that the child will fulfil these things hereafter, for that they cannot be sure of: but for the time they promise, in the child’s name, faith

and obedience. Baptism is called the Sacrament of faith; and faith thus opens the door, even to children, that they may enter into covenant with GOD. And here we may reverently inquire respecting this ancient Church custom of sureties and sponsors, of persons undertaking for another what he cannot do for himself. From the allusions to it found in some early writers, it seems probable that this practice has always existed in the Church: and we cannot but notice how beautifully it falls in and agrees with all the Christian dispensation; for is not all our new and better life which we have in CHRIST, owing to Another becoming Surety¹, and, as it were, Sponsor for us,—to Another Who undertakes not for HIMSELF, but for us, to fulfil all righteousness and perfect obedience;—in order that we may be accepted in HIM? How agreeable is it to this great law of our Salvation, that even we also should after our measure “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of CHRIST²,” whereby they that are strong are to “bear the infirmities of the weak³.” How great a privilege to a Christian to be allowed to do so.

Now something of this kind is the case to a great degree in all the circumstances of our condition in this life; as CHRIST suffered the just for the unjust in order that HE might bring us unto GOD⁴; and has made us to depend, in some sense, wholly and altogether upon HIMSELF; yet has HE, notwithstanding, made us to depend likewise in manifold ways upon each other. It is very remarkable, indeed, how much our natural life is dependent upon others; for some time it is altogether so, and even to the last in great measure; for a child cannot support his natural life in any way without the assistance of others, he is put into the hands of parents and nurses; if left to himself he must die. And why should not this be the case in our spiritual life also? In like manner that the Church is spoken of⁵ as entrusting to “nursing fathers” and “nursing mothers” her sons and daughters in CHRIST.

Again, how much does GOD do for infants either by HIMSELF directly, or by means of others, while they know it not? Children gain strength and increase most at a time when they are

¹ Heb. vii. 22.

² Gal. vi. 2.

³ Rom. xv. 1.

⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 13.

⁵ Isa. xlix. 23.

even themselves quite insensible of all things as in sleep; this is no doing of their own nor of others; it is entirely the working of God; and when they are awake others must support them in life. So also with our regenerate life, it is the unspeakable gift of God when we are insensible of the gift, but others must also assist and support us in the same.

But it is in the Gospels themselves that we shall behold, as in a glass, the dealings of God with mankind, and there we shall find that what the Church does by Godfathers and Godmothers is exactly according to the law of CHRIST. Now we know that it was our LORD's custom to confer His benefits upon all men according to their faith, and their prayers and confessions that arose from that faith; so that the very law according to which all His mercies were vouchsafed was this: "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened⁶." And yet it is much to be observed that there were some who received without asking, who found without their own seeking, to whom it was opened without their own knocking: and this was the case whenever these things were done by others for them. It was not in their own case only that the faith and obedience of them that asked was of such avail; but for others also: especially for such as were not in a condition to help themselves. This may be clearly seen in the case of the paralytic⁷; we read that he was carried of four persons in his bed, and that they took the roof off the place, and let him down in the middle of the house where JESUS was, and HE seeing *their* faith said unto the sick of the palsy, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." It is not said, as in other cases, that our LORD did this seeing that he had faith to be healed, or for any especial worthiness in the sick man himself, but in those that brought him. And it is moreover especially to be noticed, that in this case it is not only the miracle of His bodily healing which is mentioned, but that of his soul also, "seeing *their* faith, HE said unto the sick man, Thy sins be forgiven."

In like manner in the case of the maniac boy whom our LORD met with on coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration, possessed with a foul spirit, whom the disciples had in vain en-

⁶ Matt. vii 8.

⁷ Mark ii. 3.

deavoured to cast out. The father cried, saying, "If Thou canst do any thing have compassion on us and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out and said with tears, LORD, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Now here again it is evident that it is not the faith of the poor boy on which the healing depends; but that of the father which brought him is received as sufficient in his son's helpless condition.

Again still more evidently is this the case when the Canaanitish woman importuned so earnestly for her daughter, who was ill at home; the unclean spirit was cast out of her daughter on account of the humble faith of the mother. Our LORD's words to her were, "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter⁸." The mother made a good confession, and the daughter, who knew not of it, was saved thereby. The same was the case also with the Centurion, of whom it was said, that the LORD marvelled⁹ at the greatness of his faith; and his sick servant was immediately healed on account of his master's faith. And in like manner the Nobleman at Cana, whose son was ill afar off at Capernaum, had him healed at the instant of his father's believing in CHRIST's word¹.

It is certainly possible that these persons whom our LORD thus restored, had themselves also that faith which our LORD required in order to work His miracles: but nothing of this is mentioned; on the contrary, it is clearly implied in all these cases that the healing depended altogether on the faith of those who made the request for others in faith.

And indeed there is a wonderful miracle which is wrought upon one that could not have had any faith or thought for himself, any more than a new-born infant: such is the case with Lazarus when raised from the grave; any one who attentively reads that account will see that it is owing to the faith of the two sisters² that this miracle is wrought by our LORD. Here is death, the very image and effect of the state in which we are by nature born, yet removed by the faith of others; and life restored to one that could not ask for himself.

And it is further to be observed in all these cases, that it is not

⁸ Mark vii. 29.

⁹ Luke vii. 9.

¹ John iv. 50.

² John xi. 40.

merely the *request* of those that asked to whom these mercies are vouchsafed ; but the state of their hearts, their repentance, their faith and obedience, and especially their humility of heart, which was the proof of these being true and genuine. These were accepted in the supplicants in behalf of those for whom they asked. It was, it may be said, on their Confession of Faith.

These cases are not the same as that of Sponsors answering at Baptism with promises of faith and obedience in the name of Infants ; because the efficacy of Baptism does not depend upon the faith and holiness of Godfathers and Godmothers ; but it shows that when the HOLY SPIRIT laid the foundations of His Church and established these customs, HE is One and the Same SPIRIT with JESUS CHRIST as HE showed HIMSELF in His dealings with men : for these are the same ways of His Providence as we find in the Gospels. It was CHRIST then that healed and gave life ; but it was the faith and confession of others to which HE vouchsafed these gifts of old : and now it is CHRIST Who gives salvation and grace at Baptism ; but it is the faith and confession of others which HE makes to co-operate with HIMSELF in His Church in bringing helpless infants to HIM.

And indeed they do for the child but the same as Hannah did for Samuel, as is expressed in these words when she brought him to the temple : “ I have lent him to the LORD ; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD³. ” The holy Samuel himself had no hand in this dedication of himself to GOD ; it was done by his mother before she could tell what he would be ; but how much was owing to this piety of his mother in dedicating her child to GOD, how much of his holiness afterwards was owing to this none can tell. As we read also in Deuteronomy⁴, of the Jews with their little children entering into covenant with GOD, and being accepted : “ Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your GOD ; your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger : that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy GOD, and into His oath. ” Even as the little children who were brought unto CHRIST, and blessed by HIM, received that inestimable privilege, not on account of their own willingness to come to HIM, but that of their friends which brought them. By means of

³ 1 Sam. i. 28.

⁴ Deut. xxix. 10.

Godfathers and Godmothers the infants are thus consigned to the Church, and committed to her care and made partakers of her promises. It may be said to be prefigured in Moses of old, when the daughter of Pharaoh took the child out of the water, and when the babe wept⁵ had compassion on it, and gave it to an Israelitish mother to nurse. Thus to the true Israel of God an infant is committed to be reared. Now how much was made by God's Providence to depend on this circumstance, of Moses being thus as a child committed to a mother in Israel? It was this, humanly speaking, that led him at last to be the deliverer of his people, instead of living as a Heathen in the house of Pharaoh.

From all these things we may see, that as all Christians are made holy by the holiness of CHRIST, and are accepted for His righteousness, and as so many persons in the Gospels were relieved and restored by the faith of others, so our whole condition, not only in this world, but in that which is to come, is made in a wonderful way to depend upon others; our salvation depends on others as well as on ourselves; the salvation of others depends not on themselves only but on us: "none of us liveth to himself; and no one dieth to himself⁶." We cannot, if we would, use the language of Cain; it is with us the very opposite; each of us is his brother's keeper⁷. And all this, because it is evident, that if we pray for another, who stands in some relation to us either from kindred or spiritual adoption, or if we set him a good example, or if we teach him his duty and exhort him to do it, then, no doubt, we assist his salvation; and, therefore, if we neglect to do these things we hinder his salvation. Now this is the case with every one of us in a thousand different ways; there is not one of us here present, who is not either hindering or promoting the salvation of some other person: not only does his own progress in the way of life depend on his own efforts, but that of others also. If, then, God makes the faith and obedience of one to work out the eternal good of another, we may well see why HE should make something of this kind to appear even at our very Baptism.

Let us place ourselves in the times of old, when CHRIST invites the little children to come to HIM: of themselves they cannot come; what if a bystander should step forward and take

⁵ Exod. ii. 6.⁶ Rom. xiv. 7.⁷ Gen. iv. 9.

up a helpless infant and bring it to CHRIST—shall not his good deed be rewarded? shall he not himself also receive a blessing by becoming thus a fellow-worker with CHRIST? Or again: in a like case, if it be said, who shall answer for this child, for he cannot answer for himself, and can know and do nothing? what a pious undertaking if one should say,—I will answer for him now, and will hereafter take care that he shall know what has been done; that he shall be taught and live according to it. Are we not quite sure, that with very gracious words of acceptance, these would have been received by CHRIST; and that an infant, as well as the sick and dying, would have been benefited by such faith of those who thus brought them?

Now we may see, I think, in the light of the Gospel history, how beautiful and truly good these promises of the Sponsors are, that we hear at the Font, and those their answers, “All this I stedfastly believe,” or, “I will,” (*i. e.* I am willing, it is my desire and wish,) to keep God’s holy will and commandments.

From this parents may learn, how much they lose by not being very careful in the choice of Godfathers and Godmothers whom they select for their children, not only on account of the assistance they may hereafter afford them in good advice and training, but even at the Font itself, and in their earliest years, how much may be gained for their children by the faith and prayers of their sureties.

Samuel in the Jewish Church became so holy a pattern at the dedication of his mother: and in the Christian Church St. Augustin, a man most devout and wonderful among the Saints of God, and a bright light in His Church, owed his conversion, as it has been supposed, to the prayers of his holy mother: and St. Paul himself, it has been thought, to the dying prayers of St. Stephen.

When CHRIST spoke of a devil being cast out by faith, HE said, “This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting⁸,” HE does not appear in that case to be speaking of the prayer and fasting of the person possessed by the devil, but of others in his behalf; and we are all by nature children of wrath, children of the devil; and by the prayers of others is this evil spirit cast out while we are helpless.

⁸ Matt. xvii. 21.

To conclude : if the sick of the palsy had his sins forgiven him when lying powerless and speechless on his bed, on account of the faith of those four persons that bare him, what an encouragement is this to us when in the Presence of CHRIST this faith in HIM is professed by those who bring the child to Baptism ; when, as being in his natural state, he seems to lie helpless before HIM, and as it were to stretch forth his hands for help ?

Or again ; if the poor man who cried out with tears in behalf of his lost and suffering child, " LORD, I believe ; help THOU mine unbelief," had his son given to his yet imperfect faith ; shall not those Godfathers and Godmothers, who come with a trembling heart and pronounce with humble misgiving that they believe ; shall not their confessions be received in behalf of a child born indeed under the wrath of GOD, but brought to CHRIST in full dependence on His promises ?

Or again ; if even the Canaanitish woman, because she confessed herself unworthy of the children's Bread, for that saying had the devil cast out of her daughter, shall not they who partake of CHRIST's Body and Blood at the Holy Communion, have their prayers answered for one that lieth not sick at home, but is found in CHRIST's own House of Prayer appealing to His mercies ?

All these things are indeed to the world " foolishness," but to the Christian, who lives by faith, they are the wisdom and power of GOD.

SERMON CCLXXVII.

A MEMBER OF CHRIST.

1 COR. xii. 12, 13.

“ For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is CHRIST.

“ For by one SPIRIT are we all baptized into one Body.”

THE Church teaches us, that we are made by Baptism members or limbs of CHRIST, like parts, as it were, of His own Body. And this engaging truth Holy Scripture sets before us in many ways: as St. Paul, at great length, in this passage, when he applies it as an earnest appeal to brotherly love, “ that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one of another,” for, says he, “ Ye are the body of CHRIST, and members in particular.” In another place, St. Paul urges the same touching figure as a reason for purity: “ Know ye not that your bodies are the members of CHRIST? shall I then take the members of CHRIST and make them members of an harlot? God forbid¹!” And oftentimes he alludes to Baptism as being the means whereby we were brought into this mysterious union with CHRIST: “ For as many of you as have been baptized into CHRIST have put on CHRIST; ye are all one in CHRIST JESUS².” In another place, St. Paul introduces it as an illustration of CHRIST’s love for us: “ No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the LORD the Church; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones³.” Nothing could more forcibly express how wonder-

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 15.

² Gal. iii. 27.

³ Eph. v. 30.

fully we are made one with CHRIST at Baptism, and one with each other, than the care and tenderness which a man has for the parts of his own body. And even the most sensitive and precious part of the body is taken to express this; for it is said of the true Israel of God, and more especially, we may be sure, of the baptized Christian, “He kept him as the apple of His eye⁴.” Our LORD makes use of many other illustrations to express the affectionate regard of GOD for His people: as that those who did the will of His FATHER should be unto HIM as brother and sister and mother⁵;—that “as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the LORD merciful unto them that fear HIM⁶.” But as if it were not enough that we should be to HIM as the nearest and dearest relation which a man has, HE makes us the very parts of His own Body; as a man feels the pains and diseases in his own limbs, and the dangers they are liable to, so also CHRIST carries our sorrows and bears our sicknesses, as if they were His own: in all our afflictions HE is afflicted⁷, even as a man is for the parts of himself, as the head is for the whole body.

This wonderful union with CHRIST is sometimes expressed by another figure. Thus, in the Baptismal Service, we give thanks to ALMIGHTY GOD after Baptism, that the child has been thereby *grafted* into the Body of CHRIST’s Church. That is to say, that as by grafting a branch is taken into a tree, so are we by Baptism actually made parts of CHRIST. This similitude our Blessed SAVIOUR has HIMSELF set before us in a very engaging parable, in which HE speaks of HIMSELF as a Tree, and of us as branches of the Tree. “I am the true Vine, and My FATHER is the Husbandman. Every branch in ME that beareth not fruit, HE taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, HE purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit. I am the Vine, ye are the branches⁸.” And here it may be observed, that our LORD does not tell us to become branches, nor to be made parts of the Vine, that is, of HIMSELF; for HE considers throughout that we are so already, having become so at Baptism; but His earnest exhortation to us is, that we *abide and continue in HIM*: telling us, again and again, that we must so continue in order that we may bear fruit. “Abide in

⁴ Deut. xxxii. 10.⁵ Mark iii. 35.⁶ Ps. ciii. 13.⁷ Isa. liii. 4; lxiii. 9.⁸ John xv. 1—7.

ME and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the Vine, no more can ye except ye abide in ME." Another point, equally plain, throughout this parable, is, that all members are not living members, for all branches are not living branches of the Vine; some are dead and withered, and the reason why they are dead and withered is, because they partake not of the sap of the Vine, of the SPIRIT of CHRIST. They are, or they ought to be, even here on earth, cut off from the Church, as a warning to them of what their state is in God's sight. "If a man abide not in ME, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." All this is in this present time, but then comes the end; "And men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." The same thing is expressed in another parable: in the field, which is the Church, there are both tares and wheat; and as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. "The SON of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Another thing is evident throughout this parable of the Vine, that there is no life in any branch, nor abiding in CHRIST, Who is the Vine, without bearing fruit. There is no bearing fruit without abiding in CHRIST, and no abiding in CHRIST without bearing fruit—the fruit of the SPIRIT, which is love. "He that abideth in ME and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." "Continue ye in My love: if ye keep My commandments ye shall abide in My love." And an exceeding great happiness and privilege upon earth, which makes indeed earth itself a heaven, belongs to those who abide in this union with CHRIST: a privilege, which is expressed in this promise of the parable, "If ye abide in ME, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Now what are the reflections that force themselves upon us in considering this mysterious union with ALMIGHTY GOD into which we are brought at Baptism? In the first place, if the Church is this One Body, if it is thus moved by One Spirit, and formed by One Baptism, then what are all these numerous bodies which call themselves Christians, and so many sects and parties? Surely, these cannot be what our Blessed SAVIOUR wished and intended,

when HE spoke of all Christians as being of one body ; they are more like the divisions of the kingdom of darkness than the mysterious union and harmony of the Kingdom of CHRIST. Surely, there is some great and fundamental mistake in supposing that there can be many bodies of Christians, many baptisms, many forms of Church government. " For as the Body is one and hath many members, so also is CHRIST⁹." All the promises are made to us as continuing in this wonderful union.

But this is not all. Surely, if Holy Baptism is, as Scripture indicates, and as the Church from the beginning has held it to be, the very means by which we are incorporated into CHRIST's mystical Body, and are made, as it were (oh, the unspeakable mystery !) " members of His flesh and of His bones¹," and become as much parts of CHRIST as the branch is a part of the vine ; there must be some great falling off in these latter days in the unworthy opinions that prevail respecting this great Sacrament of holy Baptism.

For Holy Scripture sets Baptism so high, that it will not allow it to be the work of a man, but especially of CHRIST HIMSELF. It speaks of CHRIST baptizing, and yet it expressly declares that CHRIST did not HIMSELF baptize, but His Ministers. What is this but telling us, that all Baptism by His appointed Servant in His Name is His own Baptism ; that HE is HIMSELF present, and takes up the child into His arms ? And in the Text, the HOLY SPIRIT HIMSELF is spoken of as baptizing : " by One Spirit are we all baptized into One Body." So that, as it was not Moses, the servant of God, that led the children of Israel through the Red Sea, but it was the Presence of the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD that parted the waters, and led them through the wilderness afterwards for forty years, as a cloud or pillar of fire ; so it is no less than the SPIRIT of GOD and CHRIST present in His Church, by Whom at Baptism we are made branches of the true and living Vine ; it is not the Minister, but it is CHRIST HIMSELF in His Word, and the Water like that which flowed from His side, washing the soul : and therefore he that is baptized is said, in Holy Scripture, to have " put on CHRIST."

But how is it considered—first of all by Godfathers and God-

⁹ 1 Cor. xii. 12.

¹ Gen. ii. 23. Eph. v. 30.

mothers themselves when they come to the Font with the child—have they, generally speaking, any adequate and worthy notion of what a serious matter it is? Do they not often look upon Baptism as little more than an outward ceremony, or the giving of a name? or at best, do they not often consider it, like circumcision, appointed indeed of God, but merely like a Jewish rite, or outward ordinance? Are not even the sponsors, who come to answer for others, often, in a great measure, themselves ignorant of the very nature of Baptism? not only of what they undertake as sponsors, what they are required to say at the time, and to do afterwards, but are little aware of what Baptism is, what a blessing it is to the child; have never given any serious consideration to the subject! And indeed it may be, that while they answer for others, they have never even taken upon themselves the vows of their own Baptism; have never even received the Holy Communion, and therefore are scarcely to be considered Christians themselves; and it may be, have no other thought on the matter than that of doing a kind act to a neighbour or relative: or may consider it a compliment to themselves to be asked, like any other mark of attention paid to them in worldly matters. Some indeed, strange to say, are not aware of the difference between Baptism and registration; the registering of the name, which the State requires, and which is done exactly the same for a Jew or a Heathen:—as if to be made a citizen of this wicked world, was the same thing as to be made a citizen of Heaven! Thus do some, without the least thought or seriousness, confound the Church of God with the world which “lieth in wickedness,” the kingdom of Heaven with the kingdom of Satan, and light with darkness. For the registration is nothing else than this,—that the State thereby gives full liberty to all to be Christians or not, as they please, without any worldly inconvenience for not being Christians; not a substitute for Baptism in any way, nor any thing whatever to do with it. Few, indeed, it is to be hoped, are so ignorant as not to know this: but still it must be confessed, that the notions and impressions under which Godfathers and Godmothers themselves come to the holy Font throughout the country in these days, are such, that Christians in the early and better times of the Church, if they were to arise among us, would suppose that it was a new faith and a new Baptism; they would think

that those could not in any way be Christians at all, who came to holy Baptism in this indifferent and thoughtless manner; "where God is," said they, "there must be the fear of HIM:" but there is no fear of HIM in these Baptisms, there is no feeling of a sinful child of Adam being made thereby a new creature and becoming one with CHRIST.

And the next to the Godfathers and Godmothers whom we should look to, are the Parents themselves; do they whom it most nearly concerns worthily consider it? For a child to be born into this world under the wrath of God, and in danger of eternal damnation, is no subject of joy to a Christian; but to be born again in CHRIST, and made an heir of Heaven, this is an exceeding blessedness to any parent. Do they look upon their children, when they receive them home from holy Baptism, as different to what they were before, as the children of grace are to the children of wrath? do they look upon them as a treasure from Heaven which God has entrusted to them? do they watch over them as such, taking all possible care that they may continue *living* members of CHRIST's Body? do they try to consider what such little ones are in the eyes of God, and of those holy Angels who always behold His face in Heaven? If we were to read to you the words and sayings of holy Bishops and Martyrs who lived in the first ages, and died for the faith, when *they* speak of Baptism, their words would seem to Christians of these days as fanciful and overstrained—almost as idle tales; because they realized these great things which Holy Scripture speaks of, walking by faith, "not by sight."

When children are baptized, it is often a sad thought to reflect to what a home they are to be taken; how much will be done, before they come to be confirmed, to undo the great work of God, by the example of those around them. What pains will be taken by inconsiderate persons around to make them worldly and unchristian; what bad words they will hear, what bad passions they will witness! And all this because people do not consider what Baptism is: for, doubtless, if they thought otherwise, it might often be the case that to have a baptized child in a family would be like having a good Angel in it; "for of such," says our Blessed SAVIOUR, "is the Kingdom of Heaven." Surely, it might be the means of taking many a parent to Heaven, if they would

always speak and act in a way that might do good and not harm to an innocent child.

But there is another point of view, in which it will appear still more evident how far our notions of holy Baptism fall short of what the Bible and Church teach us respecting it, and that is in the little consideration which, for the most part, we ourselves have of our own Baptism.

How little do men consider, how much whatever good they may have done is owing, not to themselves, but to their being grafted at Baptism into the living VINE! We are but little aware how much the good thoughts that come into our mind may be owing to the unspeakable gift given us at Baptism; how much repentance in after years may be but the struggles of that HOLY ONE, into whose Body we were grafted at Baptism! the very pains of conscience we endure may be the remains of that Heavenly life within us. As in bodily diseases when mortification takes place pain ceases, so is it with the soul; when men feel no more pain of conscience for their crimes, it is a sign that they are dead members, and that the spirit of life has left them. And even when repentance takes place in after life, in a manner that appears like a sudden conversion, what is it but the breaking in of light upon the soul; from the good SPIRIT vouchsafed at Baptism, —that light which had been before stifled and buried by bad passions? For the light of the Sun may break forth even late in the day, but this is no proof that it was not in the skies before, but only that it was hidden by clouds.

How little, I say, do men in these days attribute these things to their being united with CHRIST, and made parts of His Body at Baptism! And, alas! what is still more serious and lamentable, if we do not sufficiently consider the great privileges of Baptism, still less do we its awful responsibilities, and the danger of falling from grace given. None have a spirit so contrite and broken, such as God delights in, or have so strong a sense of their past sins, as those who are used to think most highly of holy Baptism, as the early Christians were wont to do. The reason why men think so lightly of sin, is because they make so little account of their Baptism: they think that they may live like Heathens, although made sons of God, and yet at last take to themselves all the promises of the Gospel: whereas, it may be

observed, that almost all those instances of the returning penitent being received in the Gospel with such abundant forgiveness, are cases of ignorant Heathens, of those who sinned ignorantly in unbelief, and therefore obtained mercy, not of those who have fallen from grace given.

What it is for baptized Christians to live as if they were not baptized, what will become at last of so many among us who do thus live, it is indeed sad and fearful to think. I am sure that any one who examines the Gospels with a serious mind, will be more alarmed and apprehensive on this subject than we generally are; that he will find holy Baptism an infinitely higher privilege, and to fall from it a far more dangerous downfall, than people now suppose.

If a branch bears fruit, it must be the fruit of the Vine; we cannot indeed do the works of CHRIST, but a Christian must do the same *kind* of works as CHRIST did: of how very few can this be said?

Still, blessed be the great forbearance and love of ALMIGHTY God, it is to be hoped that we are not as yet cut off from the living Vine. We may still say the Lord's Prayer; we may still join in the prayers of the Church; we may still partake of the Holy Communion; we may still abide in CHRIST, and partake of His fulness, and be nourished by His SPIRIT.

True, indeed, it is, that some among us have committed crimes, for which, if the Church was in a healthy state, they would be (at all events, for a time) forbidden to approach the Holy Communion and to join in the prayers of the Church—would be cut off from the living Vine until they had repented.

And many more are there among us who must be conscious of secret sins, for which they deserve to be thus cut off from the Communion of the faithful.

But still, if we have in ourselves any earnest desire for prayer, any habit of denying ourselves in order to give alms, any actions of love and forgiveness to our enemies, all these can only be from the good SPIRIT, and, therefore, may afford us a hope that we are not altogether dead branches—that we are not cut off from the Vine.

Blessed are they who bear fruit, however feebly; and whom the Heavenly HUSBANDMAN purgeth with trials and afflictions,

and by His own searching Word, that they may bear more fruit!

But, it must be confessed, that the very air in which we live in these days, the air of lukewarmness and indifference which has come over the world, is such, that it is very difficult for any Christian of himself to have at all a due sense of the great blessings and great dangers which surround us.

When we come to read of the constant watchings, and fastings, and prayers of the early Saints, their very deep and lively sense of the things of the next world, and their indifference to this; how rich men gave up all their goods, and lived in hardship and poverty, in order that they might have every advantage of devotion, and yet lived in great humility, in fear and trembling to the last: when there appeared to be a great struggle among Christians who should be most humble, most devout, most mortified, and dead to the world—when we read of these things, and look around, alas! how great is the change!

SERMON CCLXXVIII.

A CHILD OF GOD.

GAL. iii. 26, 27.

“Ye are all the children of GOD by faith in CHRIST JESUS. For as many of you as have been baptized into CHRIST, have put on CHRIST.”

WE are taught by the Catechism that we are made by Baptism children of GOD, having been before children of wrath. And in the Baptismal Service we give thanks for being “regenerate” or born-anew. And because we are by Baptism brought into this new relation to GOD, in which we were not by nature, we are said to be made His children *by adoption*. We give thanks to ALMIGHTY GOD that HE has been pleased to regenerate the infant with His HOLY SPIRIT, and to receive “him for His own child by adoption.” St. Paul more than once makes use of this expression; as he does in the place from which the Text is taken, where he dwells on this point and others arising out of it. “GOD hath sent forth His SON,” he says, “that we might receive the adoption of sons.” And, indeed, this doctrine necessarily flows from the former point in the Catechism; for if we are made members of CHRIST, and, as it were, one with CHRIST, Who is the true SON of GOD, and receive the Spirit of the SON, then are we also in some manner sons of GOD; although, of course, not in the same high sense in which CHRIST is the SON of GOD.

For our Blessed LORD HIMSELF condescends to call us His brethren, and His FATHER our FATHER: “Go unto My Brethren,”

said HE at the Resurrection to Mary Magdalene, "and say unto them, I ascend unto My FATHER and your FATHER, and unto My God and your GOD." And therefore our Blessed LORD is said, on His rising from the dead, to be "the First-born among many brethren." "For both HE that sanctifieth," says St. Paul, "and they who are sanctified, are all of One, for which cause HE is not ashamed to call them brethren." And this great mystery of our own Baptism was graciously set before us in our LORD's Baptism, though HE needed it not. As the SPIRIT then descended on our LORD, so is HE given to us at our Baptism; and as the Voice from Heaven then declared our LORD the SON of GOD¹, so are we at Baptism made the children of GOD.

Thus, as the Gentiles were in a state of nature, and considered "strangers and foreigners," the Jews were under the Law, and considered servants of GOD: but the Christian is in the state of Grace, and made, not a stranger, not a servant, but a child of GOD.

Now St. Paul reminds us of some points that arise out of this relationship. One of these is—that to continue as sons we must live under the guidance of His HOLY SPIRIT; "For as many as are led by the SPIRIT of GOD, they are the sons of GOD²." And he particularly dwells upon this, that as we are by the SPIRIT made sons of GOD, and have received into our hearts the SPIRIT of His SON, therefore, we are able to look up to GOD as our FATHER. Thus, to the Galatians, he says: "Because ye are sons, GOD hath sent forth the SPIRIT of His SON into your hearts, crying, ABBA, FATHER. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son³." And to the Romans: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the SPIRIT of adoption, whereby we cry, ABBA, FATHER." Abba is the Hebrew word for father, and is more expressive and significant than our word "father." Thus we read, that when our LORD HIMSELF prayed in the agony in the garden, HE said, "ABBA, FATHER, if it be possible let this cup pass from ME⁴."

And St. John, in his first Epistle, alludes in a very touching and beautiful manner to this subject. "Behold," says he, "what manner of love the FATHER hath bestowed upon us, that we

¹ Matt. iii. 17.² Rom. viii. 14.³ Gal. iv. 6, 7.⁴ Mark xiv. 36.

should be called the sons of God. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when HE shall appear we shall be like HIM⁵."

Since, therefore, we are, as baptized Christians, brought into this new and endearing relationship to ALMIGHTY GOD, the important question arises, what are all those points of duty and of privilege which are given to us in consequence? Now, it may be observed, that the whole of our Blessed SAVIOUR'S Sermon on the Mount is addressed to us especially as the children of God: let any one look through it, and he will find the expression "your FATHER which is in Heaven," and the like, repeated with a very remarkable frequency⁶.

Thus our LORD teaches us, that this expression of God being our FATHER is not a mere name; but that all our notions of a father, from fathers on earth, fall very far short of that fatherly love and kindness which there is in ALMIGHTY GOD towards us; that a parent's affection does but faintly show this. "What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil," that is, being evil and unkind even as fathers, when compared with the more than fatherly goodness of ALMIGHTY GOD, "if ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your FATHER which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask HIM?"

Another consideration which our Blessed LORD impresses upon us is this, that this our FATHER is in Heaven and sees in secret, and therefore that we should do all things as in His sight, and without regard to appearances. This HE repeats three times, in speaking of Alms, Prayer, and Fasting, thus, "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your FATHER which is in Heaven." "That thine alms may be in secret, and thy FATHER which seeth in secret shall HIMSELF reward thee openly."

Another duty which our LORD urges upon us from being the children of God is this, that we must cast aside all anxiety about things temporal, which is no less than distrust of His fatherly

⁵ 1 John iii. 2.

⁶ Matt. v. 16. 23. 45. 47, 48; vi. 1. 4. 6. 8, 9. 14, 15. 18. 26. 32; vii. 11. 21.

care. "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly FATHER feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek:" that is to say, for those whom you consider as strangers from God, who have not received the adoption of sons, there may be some excuse for them in seeking these things, but surely not so for you; "for your Heavenly FATHER knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

But the duty which our Blessed LORD most of all requires of us as children of God, is the love of our enemies; it is this especially which HE has pointed out to us as the duty in which the Christian, as a child of God, is to differ both from the Gentile and also from the Jew. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, . . . and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." . . . "That ye may be the children of your FATHER which is in Heaven, for HE maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth His rain on the just and the unjust." And, "Be ye merciful as your FATHER which is in Heaven is merciful." And in the Beatitudes HE had said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

But more than all, in order that we may support in ourselves the Spirit of adoption, our SAVIOUR, in the Sermon on the Mount, has given us the LORD'S Prayer, which begins with the words, "Our FATHER which art in Heaven;" and is especially the prayer of God's children. So much so, that in the early Church, those who were being instructed in the Christian Religion, before they were baptized, were not allowed to use this Prayer, because they could not properly say, "Our FATHER which art in Heaven," until they were made His children at Baptism, and had received the Spirit of adoption.

But now a humble mind, conscious of many sins and failings, may well doubt whether it may not have lost the privilege of being God's child; and here the great love of our Heavenly FATHER comes in for our encouragement and comfort, and by the parable of the Prodigal Son, has supplied us with all that we can need, showing us that so far from such misgivings being displeas-

ing to HIM, they indicate that very temper which is most accepted of HIM. And therefore our Church teaches us to be always coming to GOD with this feeling of unworthiness, by putting as one of the sentences always used before our Morning and Evening Service, in the Prayer Book, "FATHER, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." Make me one of Thine hired servants—"enter not into judgment with Thy servant." And here we may remember, when these words are used in the parable, that not only does the father receive him again as his own son, but he sees him afar off, and hastens to meet and bring him back, and receives him with much welcome⁷.

So many and so great, little children, are those blessings which you have received at Holy Baptism, words of man cannot speak how great they are, and heart of man cannot conceive. It is the unspeakable gift of the HOLY SPIRIT imparted to you. Well indeed may it be, it is nothing wonderful, that you are so precious in the sight of ALMIGHTY GOD, that, as our LORD says, the highest Angels which behold the face of GOD watch over you,—trembling for you lest you fall away from blessedness so great. We cannot be surprised that our LORD should have said, "Woe unto him that offendeth," or maketh to fall away, "one of these little ones;" "it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea⁸."

Remember, little children, that you have a FATHER which is in Heaven, so much more kind than every earthly parent, that fathers on earth are called evil⁹, and unkind even to their own children, in comparison with that great love which GOD has for you. Remember, that HE is always at hand to hear every prayer that you can utter; that HE will answer every request you can make to HIM; that HE knows all your troubles; that HE careth for you; that HE numbers all the hairs of your head; that no evil can happen to you either in life or in death, if you will trust in HIM and love HIM; that no evil spirit and no evil man can hurt you. Remember, that it is for JESUS CHRIST's sake that HE loves you, and that you can make no return to HIM for all His love, but by trying to be like JESUS CHRIST. Remember, that if

⁷ Luke xv. 20.⁸ Matt. xviii. 6. 10.⁹ Luke xi. 13.

your earthly parents and friends watch over you, it is only because your Heavenly FATHER puts it into their hearts to do so; it is HE that makes them to love you; it is HE that makes them to take care of you. HE HIMSELF is watching over you, and His Angels are watching over you far more than any one on earth can do. When the Church of GOD took you up into its arms at your Baptism, it was JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF that took you up—it was HE that saved you from death everlasting, and made you no less than a child of GOD.

Remember, little children, that if you would continue sons of GOD as you have been made, you must be very different from the world around you, which the Catechism calls the “wicked world,” and of which the Bible says, that “the whole world lieth in wickedness¹.” If you read in the Bible what JESUS CHRIST was, how HE loved and prayed always, and went about doing good, then you will see that to be at all like HIM you must be very different indeed from what you see around you. You must remember always that it is the broad way, the way which the many go, that leadeth unto destruction, and therefore if you are only like other people, then you may be sure that you are not going to Heaven. You must endeavour to please GOD, to live to your FATHER which is in Heaven, more than other children do who are around you; more than the grown people do whom you see around. Begin early to remember, and think all your life long of your SAVIOUR’s words: “Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

Never let any one persuade you that you can commit sin, and yet continue to be a child of GOD: our LORD’s own Beloved Disciple gives you especially this warning; “Little children,” he says, “let no man deceive you—he that committeth sin is of the devil.” “Whosoever is born of GOD doth not commit sin,”—“in this the children of GOD are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of GOD, neither he that loveth not his brother².”

Again and again I say unto you, little children, do not any one of you think that you can live as the world does, and yet at last be received into Heaven as a child of GOD. You must begin

¹ 1 John v. 19.

² 1 John iii. 8. 10.

by being very different from others; not outwardly singular, but by thinking always of your FATHER which is in Heaven in all you say and do; in praying to HIM, and thinking of His words very far more than others of these evil days.

And you that have passed the age of childhood, can it be said to you, as to those early Christians to whom St. John wrote, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one?" Thus could an Apostle write to a flock of early Christians. But what must we say? Should we not with greater truth say the very contrary of such among ourselves, We cannot speak to you because ye are weak, and the Word of God abideth not in you, and ye have not overcome the wicked one, nay, rather are overcome by him? For can it be said of the young that are growing up around us, that they are like the children of God? that they live separate from the world and its desires? We can scarcely have a more plain proof of the state of the young than the Holy Communion. It is indeed true, that persons may be present at the Altar, and yet not worthy to partake of the children's bread; and therefore there being many Communicants afford no sure evidence that things are as they should be; but this is very certain, that no one can be always or habitually absent from the LORD's Supper, wilfully and of his own accord, without losing the grace of God. In such persons certainly there can be no faith in CHRIST JESUS; and therefore what becomes of their great Baptismal blessing in being made God's children? for, as St. Paul says, "Ye are children of God through faith in CHRIST JESUS." Such persons cannot certainly be led by the SPIRIT; but what again says St. Paul? "As many as are led by the SPIRIT OF GOD they are the sons of GOD." Now I mention the LORD's Supper as being a palpable and clear proof before all the world; for to put this Great Sacrament on its very lowest ground it is a Confession of the faith, and utterly to reject it is to deny the faith. In early times persons were commonly put to death, or suffered much, for confessing their faith in CHRIST; now, although some might be ridiculed, or scorned, or appear singular for attending the LORD's Table, yet these are not such strong temptations to deny the faith as the first Christians had surely. Their lives and property will not be in danger. But this is a

sign and a proof such as none can mistake, that they have fallen back from their Baptismal blessings. St. John, when he breaks out in wonder and thanksgiving at this; the great love of God in making us His children now and hereafter; he adds, "He that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as HE is pure." Do the young among us show indications that they purify themselves in thought, word, and life? Alas! is not the contrary too plainly the case all around us? It is evident they think in their hearts that they may live without God now, and turn to Him by and by, at a more convenient season. And therefore the HOLY SPIRIT leaves them, and they cannot turn afterwards; and so they continue, having no hope, and without God in the world. For God is not mocked; and as they reject Him, so HE rejects them. And St. Paul says: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the HOLY GHOST—if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the SON OF GOD afresh."

And what shall we say of the aged? of them whose night is drawing on wherein no man can work? Death, indeed, may be called night, as it brings rest and the end of labour; but if they live as Holy Scripture supposes, it is not their night that approaches in death; but their night is the night of this world—this kingdom of darkness which is fast wearing away; and to them the Day is approaching, the Day of light and joy which will never set: as children of a FATHER which is in Heaven they are nearer to their home, to the FATHER Whom they have served and longed for, and Who is looking out to receive them. But, alas! of how few can this be said? how few are there who, as they grow older, are not bowed down more and more with worldly carefulness, as if their Heavenly FATHER cared not for them; and with distrust and want of love to others, as if they were not all brethren and God's children in JESUS CHRIST? To be free from worldly cares, to love our enemies and do them good, to pray to God always with a full trust in His goodness, this is the great privilege of being God's children—of the spirit of adoption, of which the Apostle St. Paul so often speaks. From all these great and wonderful blessings we have indeed most sadly fallen; so that really we hardly know how to take comfort to ourselves in

God's great promises, or to speak comfort to others. The lives of many, in these days, are so far from what they ought to be, and from what they are expected to be, as Christians, if we look to Holy Scripture and the commands it gives, or to the lives of the early Christians which exemplified those commands, that we hardly know how far we have gone astray; so entirely do we need amendment. We have, many of us, to be called to what the Apostle calls the very fundamental principles of CHRIST's religion, as if for the first time—repentance from dead works, and faith towards God, and eternal judgement.

In this state of things, I know of no greater consolation than this, that the use of the LORD's Prayer is still afforded us. To many on their sick and dying beds, who have lived wicked lives, and to those who by any depression of sickness, or otherwise, are led to reflect on the consequences of those sins against which God's judgement is pronounced, the LORD's Prayer, and especially the very first words of it, may be an unspeakable treasure. In these cases, there is often no sufficient proof of repentance on which they can rest their hopes of pardon. For although, doubtless, by God's mercy all sin is forgiven on true repentance, yet such repentance is very rare, and seldom so full and perfect as to allow of any assured grounds of entire forgiveness and absolution. In all these cases, to be allowed to use the LORD's Prayer, and to be invited to say the words, "Our FATHER which art in Heaven," is full of soothing consolation: and more than this, the frequent and thoughtful use of these words, with serious reflection on all which this meant in each petition with particular application to ourselves, this tends very much to restore hope; and to promote, in some degree, all that is meant by the spirit of adoption. Now, all of us know the LORD's Prayer by heart surely. But how very few have ever considered how much there is in every part! Let us not be content to say it over morning and evening, or in Church on Sundays, but let us say it over many times in the day, thinking over each part of it; and it will do much to heal the wounds of our sick souls, and to restore us again to the hope that we are God's children; for he that is truly fit to say the LORD's Prayer is fit for Heaven.

SERMON CCLXXIX.

AN INHERITOR OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

COL. i. 12.

“ Giving thanks unto the FATHER, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in Light.”

THE great subject of thanksgiving for a Christian is, that he is made a partaker of that great inheritance which is laid up for him in Heaven. Thus our LORD said to His disciples, “ In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you ; but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven ¹. ” And the Church assures each of us that he is made at his Baptism “ a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven. ” We are, as St. Paul says, “ children of God ; and if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with CHRIST ². ”

And thus we find in the Baptismal Service it is stated, that we must *not doubt, but earnestly believe* that God “ will give unto ” the child “ the blessing of eternal life, and make him partaker of His everlasting kingdom. ” And we afterwards pray accordingly that the child may, that is at Baptism, be “ made an heir of everlasting salvation ; ” that our LORD JESUS CHRIST would “ give him the Kingdom of Heaven, and everlasting life. ”

And this, we may observe, like other points of our Baptism, was set before us as in a figure at the Baptism of our LORD ; for then not only was HE declared the beloved SON of GOD, as we are at Baptism made children of GOD, and the HOLY SPIRIT seen visibly to descend upon HIM, as HE is given unto us at Baptism,

¹ Luke x. 20.

² Rom. viii. 17.

but it is said expressly, “ and the Heavens were opened ³.” Then also are the Heavens opened unto us, calling us, as it were, to that our true home and country; and not only inviting us thither, but sending forth spiritual gifts, the HOLY GHOST HIMSELF coming down to prepare and fit us to ascend thither. Then is the gate of the Heavenly Jerusalem opened to us; we are made citizens of it; our names are written and enrolled there, as citizens were in old time, in that city unto which they belonged; we are made heirs and inheritors of that country; we have nothing at all to do here but to fit and prepare ourselves for it; to send on our treasures there beforehand; to set our faces steadfastly towards the Heavenly Jerusalem.

But it may be observed, that this inestimable privilege, although it is to be to us beyond all others the subject of rejoicing and thanksgiving, yet this does not imply any assurance on our part of our final perseverance and acceptance. For when our LORD told His disciples to rejoice, because their names were written in Heaven, yet the very best of them were not only at that time, but even long after, in great danger of falling away: even of the Twelve our LORD said, that Satan had desired to have them, and to sift them as wheat: one of them denied our LORD; and one of them we know altogether fell away. Thus in the Book of the Revelation our LORD says, of him that overcometh, “ I will not blot out his name out of the book of life ⁴ ;” which seems to signify that there are some whose names HE will blot out of the Book of life, although their names had been before “ written in Heaven.” And therefore St. Jude speaks of the fall of Christians, as like that of the Jews, after they were once saved, and of the falling away of Angels, “ which kept not their first estate ⁵ .”

And here in the Catechism, and in the service for Baptism, where we are spoken of as being made inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven, it is evident that the future and eternal Kingdom after death is meant, where the righteous shall for ever reign with God: it is of this blessed Kingdom, that city of the LAMB, into which nothing that defileth can enter, of which we are made heirs at Baptism. And this it is necessary to notice; for the Kingdom of Heaven is used in Holy Scripture in different and

³ Matt. iii. 16.

⁴ Rev. iii. 5.

⁵ Jude 5, 6.

distinct senses. Thus it is sometimes spoken of the reign of CHRIST in our own hearts, where every bad passion is made subject to HIM, and put under His feet; as when our LORD says, "The Kingdom of God is within you⁵," and is described by the holy Apostle as consisting "in righteousness and peace and joy in the HOLY GHOST⁶." And of this the Kingdom of God in our own hearts, the parable seems to speak when it says, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field." And so also when "the Kingdom of Heaven" is likened "unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it⁷." For this is, no doubt, fulfilled in that man who in early times sold all that he had when he was made a Christian, and to whom our LORD promised that he should receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

But there is another sense in which the Kingdom of Heaven is used most commonly in the Gospel, where it means the Church of God upon earth: thus St. John the Baptist, when he spoke of our LORD's coming forth to preach and work miracles, his proclamation was, "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand⁸." The same also was that of our LORD HIMSELF; and when HE sent forth His Apostles, HE said of the cities which would not receive them, "Be ye sure of this, that the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you⁹;" that is to say, the most blessed and yet most awful Gospel of CHRIST, His Kingdom not of Glory hereafter, but His Kingdom of Grace on earth. And it is of this Kingdom that the parables most distinctly and most frequently speak. Where, for instance, the Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a net which was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind¹; for of course it cannot be said of the Church of God in Heaven hereafter, that it gathers of every kind; and so also where the Kingdom is likened unto a field which is filled both with corn and weeds, where the SON of Man sowed wheat, but while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares. And so also when the Kingdom of Heaven is

⁵ Luke xvii. 21.⁶ Rom. xiv. 17.⁷ Matt. xiii. 44. 46.⁸ Matt. iii. 2.⁹ Matt. xii. 20.¹ Matt. xiii. 47; xxv. 31.

likened unto a grain of mustard in its small beginning, but which was to be, as it now is, like a great tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches of it. The same was also signified in that which is a very common figure or type of the Church, the Ark of Noah ²; for into that both clean and unclean animals were admitted; even as in the Kingdom of Heaven now on earth there are both good and bad men. But not so that city of God which is above; for into that nothing that defileth, no unclean animal can enter; “for without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie ³.”

And sometimes, indeed, the Kingdom of God is used in all these three senses at one and the same time: thus in the Lord's Prayer, when we say, “Thy Kingdom come,” we may indeed, and ought to mean, that final and blessed Kingdom of holiness and rest, for which the beloved St. John prayed, when at the end of the Bible he said, “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come!” and then for himself he repeats the Prayer, “Even so come, Lord Jesus.” And St. Peter also speaks of Christians as “looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.” But although a good man ought to mean this when he says, in the Lord's Prayer, “Thy Kingdom come,” and certainly he ought so to live as to be able sincerely to pray and wish for Christ's last coming, yet by these words, “Thy Kingdom come,” we may also mean and pray for the Kingdom of God being more thoroughly and entirely established within us: for unless it is so, we cannot, of course, pray for the day of Judgement; unless His Kingdom is already within us, we cannot wish for the coming of Christ in His last and glorious Kingdom; and therefore we may well mean both of these things, that Christ may come, and that we also may be so fitted and prepared by His Grace as not to be ashamed before Him at His coming. But we also mean, when we say, “Thy Kingdom come,” the establishment of Christ's Kingdom in the world: that our own friends and neighbours may be brought more entirely into the obedience of Christ; and likewise that the Gospel may be published throughout the world. And when we pray for this, we do also pray for

² 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21.

³ Rev. xxii. 14, 15.

CHRIST's last Coming, and His Kingdom of joy and peace ; for as soon as the Gospel is published throughout the world, then we know will the end be ⁴.

But although the words " the Kingdom of Heaven " are used in these three different senses, yet, as I said, in the Catechism, when we speak of being made " an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven," we speak of the Kingdom of God hereafter : for an heir or an inheritor signifies the possession of something not present, but future—not the enjoyment of any thing now, but a promise to succeed to it hereafter ; as in the Collect for to-day, " heirs of eternal life ⁵." We are, indeed, already at Baptism members of CHRIST and children of God, but the kingdom to which we are to succeed is a future kingdom. We are like all our fathers before us, and like the Jews of old, but strangers and sojourners before God, who have no home or inheritance here, but rejoice in hope and trembling, looking to a future reward, to being made children of God in that " new Heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

We may, therefore, well be said to be at Baptism made members and citizens of God's Kingdom now upon earth, as St. Paul says, " fellow-citizens with the Saints and of the household of God⁶;" but heirs or inheritors of that Kingdom of Heaven hereafter : to use the words of the same Apostle, " partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in Light⁷." We are already in God's Kingdom, His Kingdom of Grace, and have a promise and pledge given us of inheriting His Kingdom of Glory hereafter.

Now it is for this inheritance that we are to give thanks unto the FATHER : it is in this that we are to rejoice, that is to say, because our names are written in Heaven. This may sound to some as an agreeable doctrine, as a pleasing and easy duty ; for what is more so than to rejoice and give thanks ? Delightful, indeed, such a service must be ; but there is nothing less easy or less common than for any one to be truly thankful and rejoicing always, because of that Heavenly inheritance which God hath promised.

Out of ten lepers that were healed, one only returned to give thanks ; so that even JESUS CHRIST, although HE knew what was

⁴ Matt. xxiv. 14.

⁵ Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

⁶ Eph. ii. 19.

⁷ Col. i. 12.

in man, yet even HE marvelled at it⁸. But bodily health and restoration from sickness is a blessing which all of us know how to value, and therefore in such a case, thanksgiving might be more naturally expected. But a restoration from sin, the blessing of being with God and His good Angels after death and for ever, this is a deliverance which is valued by very few,—by none, indeed, as it ought to be. It is full, not of present sensible enjoyment, but of future promises, and requires faith, whereas our spirits are bowed down by things present and sensible.

There is, indeed, nothing in the world more difficult to find, than this temper of true and sincere thankfulness for the Heavenly promises which God has given us. Generally speaking, the longer men live, and, therefore, the less time they have to live upon earth, the less do they truly value and rejoice in God's Heavenly inheritance: some turn back to their childhood, to the thoughts and places of their childhood, as if they found comfort in the thought of it, and wished that they again were children—as if they had no better childhood, and no better country to look forward to: others are more full of plans and projects with regard to this world as they grow older, as if there were no other treasures, no other inheritance that they believed in or cared for. Surely, I say, the temper of thankfulness for the great inheritance which God has given us, is, of all things in this world, the most difficult to be met with; and yet it is that which we most need, in the trials we have to undergo. In poverty, in distress, in sickness, in sorrows of all kinds, what do we more need than a deep and thankful sense of that inheritance which God hath prepared for them that love HIM? and surely not less so in the comforts, the successes, the pleasures of this life. What a danger is there lest our hearts should be taken up by them, made gross and dull of understanding? and what need that we should keep up a lively and true sense of those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore? Of the two, indeed, we are more likely to forget that better inheritance which is in store with God amidst the comforts of this life, than among its evils; but, in both alike, it is most needful that it should be most thankfully remembered by us.

⁸ Luke xvii. 17.

So needful, indeed, is it, that this may be considered to be one of the marks whether a man is a sincere Christian or not. The person in the parable who has found the Kingdom of Heaven, is as one who hath found a great treasure, and *for joy* thereof selleth all that he hath. And although eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to understand what God hath laid up for them that love HIM, yet St. Paul says, that these things are revealed unto us by His SPIRIT⁹: it is given unto us, even now, to know and rejoice in that future inheritance which is hid with CHRIST in GOD. None but a good man can know, and rejoice in, and be thankful for, those blessings of the Kingdom.

And thus it is that those Saints of GOD, which are in holy Scripture set before us for our imitation, as in the eleventh chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, may be seen to differ from all other men in this, that they were thankful for GOD's promises, that they were always rejoicing in, and giving thanks to GOD for those good things HE had held out to them. It is said of them, "all these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them; and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth:" "they desired a better country, that is an heavenly;" "they looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is GOD." Thus was Abraham ever walking above the world, knowing that GOD had some good thing which HE would give him; for GOD had HIMSELF said unto him, "I am thy exceeding great reward¹." Thus Moses despised the pleasures and honours of Egypt, because he rejoiced in GOD's promises to Israel², and in that inheritance which HE long before had vouchsafed them. And these, and many more in the Old Testament, are held out as patterns and examples to us, especially in that one point, that they realized the things that were unseen, and therefore cared not for things seen and present, whether pleasant or painful: they turned not to the right hand nor to the left, stedfastly setting their faces to that country.

But yet they had no such pledge and promise as is given unto us at Baptism: the kingdom spoken of to them was often but an

⁹ 1 Cor. ii. 10.¹ Gen. xv. 1, 2.² Heb. xi. 26.

earthly kingdom, and by faith only they raised their hopes to something higher and better, feeling assured that God had something far superior to earthly rewards for those who waited for Him.

But if these were ever thus rejoicing in hope; on the contrary, they who fell away were such as were not thankful for God's promises, nor rejoiced in them. Remember Esau, who lightly esteemed and despised his birthright, because it was future; and afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. The inheritance was already his, but he cast it away.

Remember the children of Israel in the wilderness, who thought scorn of that pleasant land, and gave no credence unto God's words, and therefore looked back to Egypt—longed for what they had there left; and thus fell away, and lost those promises and that inheritance which they did not value; after they were already, as it were, made partakers of it, already saved, already chosen as God's children.

Remember Lot's wife; who, though she had an Angel for her guide, promises of protection, and a place of safety pointed out to her, yet she was not thankful nor rejoiced in this, and therefore cast a longing look behind to the pleasures she had left.

Remember those persons in the parable in the Gospel, who when they were invited to a marriage-feast and the King's House, yet did not rejoice in this, neither were thankful; and therefore were taken up with other matters, and would not come to it—although it was a happy feast, a place of pleasure, to which they were invited.

But remember, above all things, and observe, not the parable alone, but the fulfilment of that parable; how our Blessed LORD said that this parable would be fulfilled in these latter days, when men are invited by His Gospel: that in these days, it would be as in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot; that men would be invited, and yet would not come, being taken up in merchandise, in buying and selling, in marrying and giving in marriage; and not thankful for those high and blessed privileges to which God had called them.

It is this, all this which is going on before our eyes, and which was foretold, that gives such a power and weight to all we

read of in Scripture : of Esau despising his birthright ; of the children of Israel who died in the wilderness, not accepting the promises ; of Lot's wife, even at such a moment, when already saved, turning back to wicked Sodom ; it is this which supplies so awful a comment to our LORD's parables, and prophecies, and warnings. No book which would prove the Gospel to be true, was ever so convincing as the wicked heart of man and the state of the wicked world. Why, therefore, will we not believe His word to be true, when HE has promised such good things to them that love HIM ? If you will not believe GOD's own promise, pledge, and assurance of these great gifts and blessings, because you see that others around you do not believe them ; yet believe HIM because of His warnings and prophecies, which you see fulfilled before your eyes, declaring that so it should be.

SERMON CCLXXX.

THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL.

1 JOHN ii. 15, 16.

“If any man love the world, the love of the FATHER is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the FATHER, but is of the world.”

WE have more than once had occasion to notice that there were some remarkable circumstances in our LORD's Baptism, which seem to have been like signs of what should be in our own. And this was the case, also, after His Baptism; for after the HOLY SPIRIT had descended upon HIM, and the Heavens were opened, and HE was declared to be the SON of GOD, these wonderful gifts and blessings, instead of being the release from pain and toil, as some might have expected, were but the beginning of a far more severe trial. For we read, that “immediately the Spirit driveth HIM into the wilderness; and HE was in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan¹.” The forty days in the wilderness is, we know, in Scripture put to represent man's life of trial in the wilderness of this world. After our Baptism, therefore, we are all, like our LORD, proved whether we are truly faithful in forsaking those three great enemies which we then renounced. And, indeed, our LORD's temptation consisted precisely in those very three points in which our own does; when we renounce the flesh, the world, and the devil, and are then tried by them. His first temptation, that the stones should be made bread, was His

¹ Mark i. 12, 13.

trial and victory over the flesh: when HE was shown all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, then was His trial and victory over the world: and throughout HE was tried by, and overcame the devil. "Thus was HE tried and tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin²."

And it seems to have been appointed by ALMIGHTY GOD, that although our Blessed SAVIOUR's trials were, in some mysterious way, far more severe than any that we are called upon to undergo, yet they were not only in the same things in which we are tried, but also those in which our first Parents had fallen. For it may be observed, that it was by these three great enemies that our forefathers, Adam and Eve in Paradise, were tried and overcome: the apple of the forbidden tree, pleasant to the eyes and good for food, was the trial of the flesh; the suggestion of the serpent, that it would make them as gods, knowing good and evil, was the pride of this world; and they also throughout were tempted by Satan and overcome by him³. But there was this difference between their trial and that of our SAVIOUR: they were in a garden with abundance of every thing—our LORD was in a wilderness in want of all things: they were full—HE was hungry.

We are tried in the same manner; and in this our trial we must take part with the Old Adam, which must die⁴, or with the New Man, which is CHRIST JESUS. We have reason to fear, because we have about us that Old Adam, our old evil nature, which then fell and was overcome. But we have reason also for hope and encouragement, because we have within us that NEW MAN which was planted within us at Holy Baptism; that better nature which may be "renewed day by day⁵," "in righteousness and true holiness⁶," "after the image of HIM that created⁷" us. But in this struggle we have the assurance that we shall not be tried above our strength. "God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it⁸."

We are now in this wilderness; Satan and the world and the flesh are about us and with us; we are now engaged in this

² Heb. iv. 15.

³ Gen. iii. 1. 5, 6.

⁴ Rom. viii. 13.

⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 16.

⁶ Eph. iv. 24.

⁷ Col. iii. 10.

⁸ 1 Cor. x. 13.

contest; which will overcome, we or our enemies, God only knows.

There is another history, in which we have had occasion to notice that God has set before us a strict resemblance of our Baptism, and that which follows; such is the case in the children of Israel passing through the waters of the Red Sea. Then also was the SPIRIT visibly present to lead them in the Cloud and Pillar of Fire, and guide them from thence to the holy land of promise; as with us also at the waters of Baptism is HE present, and seen by faith, though not by sight, in order to lead us to the Heavenly Canaan. Then also were their enemies, Egypt and Pharaoh, drowned in that very sea which saved the children of God, in like manner as our great enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, are considered as dead to us and buried at holy Baptism⁹. Then were they taken as the chosen people of God, as His children, and heirs of His promises. But before they arrived at that promised land, they also were to be tried; they had a wilderness to pass through; after their Baptism in the Red Sea it might be said of them, as of our Blessed Lord, "And immediately they were led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil;" or, as it is said of them expressly, "The LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart¹." How the things which there happened to them in the wilderness were full of prophecies, and figures, and signs of what happens to Christians in their journey through this world towards their Heavenly Canaan, need not be dwelt upon in this place. Their temptations, too, were the same as ours—temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil: they longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt; they desired forbidden meats, and loathed the Heavenly bread of God; they wished to be as the world around them, like the nations that worshipped idols; and no doubt he that tempted our first parents was not idle in using all his arts to draw them away from God; and how successful he was with them we all know too well².

Again: take the history of the patriarch Abraham, which is

⁹ Rom. vi. 3, 4; Col. ii. 12.

¹ Deut. viii. 2.

² 1 Cor. x. 1—12; Ps. lxxviii.

set before us so much to be an example to ourselves, inasmuch as we ought to be by faith the true children of the faithful Abraham. He was called forth from his kindred and former idolatrous country, as we are at Baptism called out of this world; he was invited to a distant land of promise, which God had given him for an inheritance; but after all, what was his whole life but a scene of trial? The promises and the inheritance were to him but objects in the unseen future even to the last³: things present were to him a state of probation; and by his great faith alone did he prevail as "seeing Him Who is invisible."

But then it must not be supposed that a baptized Christian is to be carrying on a struggle with these his three great enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, all his life long, so as sometimes to overcome them, and sometimes to be overcome by them; such is the state of those who have never been baptized⁴, or have fallen away from grace given: but the true Christian must gain the victory; he has renounced and forsaken these things, and left them behind him; he is not to be overtaken by them again and overcome, "For whatsoever is born of God," says St. John, "overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." That is not, therefore, a saving faith in CHRIST which does not overcome the world, "To him that overcometh," says our LORD, "will I grant to sit with ME in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My FATHER in His throne⁵."

The whole matter is put very plain to us in one of our Blessed LORD's parables, the first, indeed, of all His parables, respecting His Kingdom, that is, His Church upon earth, in which we now are. In the parable of the Sower⁶, the Word is likened unto seed which is sown; the land which receives the seed is the heart of man; the different kinds of land which receive the seed represent the different states of the heart which will be found in the world at large, and also, perhaps, in every Christian congregation. It may here be observed, that in one sort of ground alone the seed bears fruit; and the three things which in the others prevent the seed from coming to perfection may well be supposed to mean

³ Heb. xi. 16.

⁴ Rom. vii.

⁵ Rev. iii. 21.

⁶ Matt. xiii. 3—24.

the devil, the flesh, and the world. Now this parable is one of the most heartsearching of all parables (and therefore, perhaps, spoken by our LORD before the rest), for this reason, that whenever it is read in Church it is probably always fulfilled in that very congregation in which it is read. It is probable that there are in each these four kinds of hearers—one in which it brings forth fruit to perfection, the others in which one of these three things renounced at Baptism prevail against it.

“A sower went out to sow his seed, and as he sowed some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it;” or, as our LORD afterwards explains it, “those by the way side are they that hear the Word; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.” Now here we are told that it is actually the case, whatever men think, that it is the devil that comes and takes away what they hear from men’s hearts, so that after they have been in Church, there is no more good left in their minds than there is seed on the beaten road when the birds have taken it away. And with whom is it in a Christian assembly with whom he has this power?—not with all, it is to be hoped, surely, but with those whose hearts he finds open to receive him—such as at other times he leads captive at his will⁷, who do, in fact, become slaves of the devil, whom they renounced at Baptism. And it may be asked, what are those sins especially which are to be considered marks of the devil’s power rather than those of the world and the flesh?—certainly, beyond all others, hate, ill will, an unforgiving unkind temper; “for he was a murderer from the beginning⁸.” And next to these, all kinds of falsehood, deceit, dishonesty; “for he is a liar, and the father of it.” This is the great danger of men coming before God with unforgiving hearts, as our LORD so often warns us; and of deceit and hypocrisy. Here, in this case, the Word does not even enter the soil at all—it lies on the surface, it is not understood, and is carried away by the devil.

The next case mentioned is this: “and some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away because it lacked moisture.” And, as our LORD says, “They on the rock

2 Tim. ii 26.

⁸ John viii. 44; 1 John iii. 12.

are they, which when they hear, receive the Word with joy; and these have no root, which for awhile believe, and in time of temptation fall away." Now this appears to allude more particularly to the *flesh*; for it is this more especially that hardens the heart, so that the dews of God's grace cannot penetrate, and His love cannot warm it. "And these receive the Word *with joy*, and believe for awhile;" for it is not possible but that the natural man, even human nature, must rejoice in things so great and good as the Word of God opens to us. Men of this kind are often very sensibly moved and affected by the things of the Gospel, and sometimes are excited by a kind of false devotional warmth, running on into enthusiastic fancies, until their lust or the next temptation occurs, and then they show that all the while the Word had no root in them. This was the case with even the wicked Herod: he also believed and rejoiced for awhile; he heard the holy John and observed him, and "did many things, and heard him gladly⁹;" but on the first lust that crossed his way and interfered with religion, he put the great and blessed Prophet into prison, and afterwards murdered him. And he went on thus hardening his heart, till, in a few years, he mocked our Blessed LORD and set HIM at nought, and wished to see some miracle done by HIM, to gratify an idle curiosity; such astonishing hardness of heart had he come to as this, that he wished to see the ALMIGHTY GOD displaying His Almighty power before him, even as a player on the stage; for, let it be observed, he actually believed that CHRIST could work miracles—he had heard of many, and wished to see one himself while he mocked HIM, although one word of our Blessed LORD might have given him over to eternal death.

This is the man who attended to a Prophet of God, who "did many things and heard him gladly." How many are there who build their hopes of salvation on no better ground than this, that for a season they have rejoiced in the light¹—that they have "heard the Word of God with gladness, and done many things:" in the meanwhile, the flesh prevails in them more and more, the Word finds no root in them, and therefore they bear no fruit unto holiness. Now neither of these two have kept their

⁹ Mark vi. 20.

¹ John v. 35.

Baptismal vow; they are such as have not sincerely renounced the devil or the flesh.

And the third sort are they with whom the *world* has its sway and power. "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it." "That which fell among thorns are they which when they have heard go forth, and are choked with the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection."

Alas! which of us has not to fear on this subject? but they who have most reason to fear are least capable of fear: he who trembles at God's Word has in him some signs of life; but he who fears not, knows not his own danger—knows not himself, and knows not God: where there is no fear, there is no love of God.

And which of us, I say, has not reason to fear at this description which our Blessed Lord has given us of those who are unprofitable servants—of those who bring no fruit to perfection? He in whom CHRIST abides "bringeth forth much fruit²." Which of us is there of whom it can be safely said, that when he hears the Word, neither does the devil take it out of his heart; nor is he one of those who for awhile believe and in temptation fall away, on account of the hardness of their hearts, in which the Word could find no place; or in whom it is not choked by the cares and pleasures of this life? And yet, let it be observed, that all these are the account of those who do not believe to the saving of their souls.

There is one only description which yet remains, "that on the good ground;" "they which in an honest and good heart having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience," "some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold;" some more fruit and some less, in various degrees, in this life present, and such as shall partake of different degrees of glory and happiness in the life to come. These are they in the parable with whom, it may be observed, neither the world, nor the flesh, nor the devil prevails: when they hear the Word of God in Church, they do not forget it, and let it pass from their minds, like the seed which the fowls of the air carry away, but so embrace and

² John xv. 5.

keep it in their hearts, that it does not escape, but bears fruit in various degrees; they are the better for it in their life and conduct afterwards—during the day and during the week; and that which is true of them to-day, or any other day when God speaks to them, is true, also, in the course of their lives. The Word in them—the seed sown in Baptism—is bringing forth fruit.

In this case, also, it is not as the shallow soil on the rock; they are not persons sensibly moved and affected at Church, and who then live no better than others; but their hearts are deep and good, and hold the seed, loving God with their whole heart.

In this case, there are no thorns springing up afterwards to choke the good seed: the cares and pleasures of this life do not hinder them in their Christian course; they have steadily chosen the good part which shall not be taken from them.

Let us hope that, even in these evil and corrupt days, there are some amongst us of this number—some who do live up to these promises made at their Baptism, who are indeed in the narrow way that leadeth unto life; let us each one for himself labour, and endeavour to be of that number—let us each one for himself fear, lest we shall not be found of that number at last.

SERMON CCLXXXI.

ALL THE ARTICLES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

JUDE, ver. 3.

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

THIS faith, “once for all delivered unto the saints,” of which St. Jude speaks, was no doubt, in substance and effect, no other than the Apostles’ Creed. “God be thanked,” says another Apostle, “that ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you¹.” This faith, “the faith” of a Christian, was once considered all in all, for those who would hope to be saved. It was for this men lived and died. The one question was whether a man was sound in the faith, whether he was ready to die for the faith, and living according to it. And not only was it necessary to believe in heart, but also to make confession of it, even when death was the consequence. Both were alike needful. Of this St. Paul speaks: “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation².”

In these days not only is men’s conduct greatly fallen off from primitive piety, but their faith also no less so; persons talk indeed of having faith, of faith being every thing, but they mean something very different from “the faith once delivered unto the saints;” and, therefore, we must endeavour to set aside these

¹ Rom. vi. 17.

² Ibid. x. 10.

worldly notions, this religion of the day, from our thoughts, and go back to our Baptism, and see what it is we have undertaken to believe on being made Christians.

It is very true, that most of the forms of religion that prevail do contain some one Christian truth—but then one truth without others, or a part of the truth without the whole, may be no better than error and falsehood. This we all know in little matters, there is no more successful way of conveying falsehoods than by keeping back part of the truth. Now some sects maintain that all we have to do is to believe and feel, some time before we die, that CHRIST is our SAVIOUR: others that all that is necessary is to follow the example of CHRIST: another makes CHRIST's speedy coming to judgment the one and only thing we are to consider important: another maintains that all the promises of the Gospel are fulfilled in this life: with all these and numberless more forms of error which take only one part of the Christian faith, and hold it separate from others, we have nothing more to do than to keep as clear of them as we shall be enabled with God's grace and blessing to do; and to turn to the Bible and to the Church of the Apostles, which, God be thanked, has in essential points always been the same from the beginning, and will continue to be so unto the end. Holy Scripture and the true Catholic Church will not allow us to choose and form a religion for ourselves in this manner, by taking one part of God's revealed word, and setting aside another, according to the devices of men; but sets before us that faith once for all delivered to the saints—"the proportion of faith³," "all the counsel of God⁴." Nor does this require any great learning or scholarship; it only requires us to go back to our Catechism and to our Baptism to know what the truth really is among all these multitudes of opinion and divisions—to know what it is we have each one of us engaged to believe. And what does our Catechism tell us? Speaking of our sponsors it says, "they did promise and vow three things in my name;" and of these the second is, "that I should believe *all* the Articles of the Christian Faith," not this Article or that, for there has never been any heresy in the world but which has believed some one or more Articles of the faith;

³ Rom. xii. 6.

⁴ Acts xx. 27.

indeed there are many dangerous sects now prevailing, which receive all the Articles of the Christian Faith, *except one or two*, but not one that receives them all; not one form of religion in the world, I say, believes all the Articles of the Christian Faith, but the Church of CHRIST only. But as that man cannot be a good man who does not keep *all* the laws of GOD, or endeavour to do so, (for many bad men have only had one besetting sin,) neither can he be a faithful Christian who does not keep, or endeavour to keep, the whole faith. And as we know that in keeping GOD's commandments, he who "offends in one point is guilty of all," so he who disbelieves one Article of the Creed cannot rightly hold and believe the others.

And now that we may know what all the Articles of the Christian Faith are, we next proceed in the Catechism to say the Apostles' Creed; for that contains all the Articles of the Christian Faith. But here some one might say, Why is it not stated that we are to believe the Bible, instead of our saying that we are to believe the Creed? Now it is, in fact, in some sense, to be considered as the same thing, for we find in the Baptismal Service, that, in one place, when speaking of this second promise, it does not state the words, "to believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith;" but "constantly to believe GOD's Holy Word;" but then it goes on to explain what is meant by this expression of believing GOD's Holy Word, by bringing forward all the Apostles' Creed, which is then repeated, and the sponsors undertake to believe in the name of the child; saying that they "stedfastly believe *all* this," and that they are desirous to be baptized in this faith. And the fact is, that if any one believes the Apostles' Creed, then he believes all the Bible also; and not only so, but he believes it unto salvation—for the Creed is nothing more than the Bible contained in a short space, or, rather, those points in the Bible most essential for us to believe, in order to be Christians. For a person may say he believes the Bible, and yet be no Christian, unless he also believes the Apostles' Creed. Indeed many have believed the Bible, *i. e.* have believed it all to be true, as a matter of fact, and yet have been no Christians at all, nor pretended to be so. They believed the history of it as a matter of history, they believed that Moses, Joshua, and others lived and died; and that CHRIST lived and died; but yet they have not believed in HIM as

GOD, nor that HE died for our sins; and, therefore, you see GOD has, in His great mercy, especially provided for this, by giving us not only the Bible, but also the Apostles' Creed, to teach us what in the Bible is most important to our salvation. The Creed is as it were a sort of key to the Bible, whereby we may unlock therein all the treasures that are hid in CHRIST; all of us, when we take up the Bible, know beforehand of the Three Persons in one GOD from the Creed, and then we find it in the Bible written in almost every page, but we know it before we take up the Bible.

Now, I say, that from all these manifold and dangerous errors which abound, a humble and unlearned Christian may be quite safe, if he will only look to his Baptism, and what he then undertook to believe. He will there find, that he was baptized according to Christ's command and commission to His Ministers, "in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST;" and doubtless if he believes constantly, according as he was baptized, in the FATHER, and the SON, and the HOLY GHOST as GOD, then according to CHRIST's promises he shall be saved. But how is he to do this? how is he to know all that is signified in this? in what parts of the Bible is he to find what is essential to salvation, so as to believe it in the spirit, and not in the letter? This we should never have known if left to ourselves, but this it is which the Apostles' Creed sets before us. This Creed is divided into three parts; the first, to explain belief in GOD the FATHER; the second, in GOD the SON; the third, GOD the HOLY GHOST. In this, the ever-blessed adorable name of the HOLY TRINITY, we were baptized, and in this we undertook to believe at our Baptism when we promised to believe the Creed.

Nor does the Church consider it sufficient that we should confess our belief in this faith once for all at our Baptism. For it may be observed in the Visitation of the Sick, when a Christian is at the point of death, the minister is instructed to remind him of the judgment of God, and then to say, "Therefore I shall rehearse to you the Articles of our Faith, that you may know whether you do believe as a Christian man should, or no." The minister then repeats the Apostles' Creed, and the dying man is instructed to say, in the very same words which were required of him by his sponsors at Baptism, "All this I stedfastly believe." Now many, in these days, who have taken up notions of religion

which they find in the world, without ever having seriously considered these matters, would ask the sick man whether he felt any assurance of pardon, whether he believed CHRIST to be his SAVIOUR, and many other such points, which are either entirely perversions of the truth, or only partial views of it, but which will be greedily caught hold of and taken up, when persons are desirous by any means to quiet their consciences by shutting their eyes against the whole truth, as it is set before us by the Bible and the Church of God. For if this is all, what becomes of that profession made at Baptism, and the solemn requirement that the child thenceforth is to “continue CHRIST’s faithful soldier and servant unto his life’s end?” What becomes of those declarations of Scripture out of number, such as these: that “he that believeth that JESUS is the SON of GOD,” “overcometh the world;” that “faith without works is dead;” that “without holiness no man shall see the LORD?”

The fact is, that to believe in CHRIST as GOD is to believe all the Apostles’ Creed; and therefore it is often so put in Holy Scripture: *e. g.*, when Philip the deacon was sent by the HOLY SPIRIT to baptize the Ethiopian eunuch, all that is recorded is that Philip said unto him, “If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest” be baptized; and “he answered and said, I believe that JESUS CHRIST is the SON of GOD⁵.” But then we must not suppose from this that Philip baptized him in the Name of CHRIST only, contrary to our LORD’s own command to His Apostles⁶, for no doubt he baptized him, as we are baptized—in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST—and as explained by the Apostles’ Creed; but there was no occasion to state all this to us; for if he believed in CHRIST as the SON of GOD, all the rest would necessarily follow. There was only one Church in those days, and that was, as it is said, “continuing stedfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine⁷,” and if any one would believe that CHRIST crucified was the SON of GOD, that which was the great stumbling-block and cause of offence, then would he readily believe all other things also which flowed from that belief.

We have seen, therefore, that with regard to our faith the

Acts viii. 37.

⁶ Matt. xxviii. 19.

⁷ Acts ii. 42.

Church sets before us at our Baptism, and also at our death, the Apostles' Creed. Nor is it only at the beginning and at the end of our Christian course, that we are required to believe with the heart unto righteousness, and to confess with our mouth unto salvation; but also twice every day in the week, when we come to Church, are we required to repeat the Apostles' Creed; and many also in their private prayers have been taught from their forefathers to repeat the Creed. The Creed, indeed, is intended to be as the rock beneath our feet when the floods arise; as a shield in the time of our spiritual dangers; as a light in the time of our darkness; as a medicine in the time our souls' sickness, and at the hour of death: and also more than this; it is intended to be as the daily food of our souls, as the air we breathe, for such indeed is his faith to a Christian; without it we are dead; and this is signified by our being taught in our daily devotions in Church to repeat the Creed. And so also was it in early ages; not only was every baptized person required at Baptism to confess belief in the Creed, but also to repeat the same in the assemblies of the faithful.

The Creed is to us what the Cloud in the wilderness was to the Israelite; that which not only led him through the Red Sea, but also continued with him afterwards throughout, regulating and directing every movement, as God thereby was guiding him.

And consider what great things we profess to believe in the Creed: the first words of it are, "GOD the FATHER ALMIGHTY," and the last words of it are, "Everlasting Life:" and we also must begin like the Creed with ALMIGHTY GOD, and end with everlasting life. And if we would do so, there is no part of the Creed but which we must believe and hold, and show by our lives that we do so.

If we believe in GOD as our Maker, then we must put our whole trust in HIM for all things at all times: if we believe in CHRIST as our SAVIOUR, then we must look to HIM only for our Salvation, not to any thing we ourselves can do: if we believe in the HOLY GHOST as our Sanctifier, then we must seek from HIM alone to renew our souls. If we believe that CHRIST suffered, we must shew forth this belief in our hearts and lives, by being willing to suffer with HIM; for if we suffer with HIM, we shall be glorified also with HIM: we must shew forth our belief in His death by

being dead with HIM from worldly desires; in His burial, by being buried with HIM in Baptism. We must shew forth our belief in His Resurrection by being risen with HIM from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; in His Ascension by having our affections with HIM in Heaven, by having our treasure there and our heart there. Or again, if CHRIST is on the right hand of GOD, to believe in this is no idle and unprofitable assent—for this it was, seeing JESUS CHRIST standing on the right hand of GOD, which supported St. Stephen at his death. Or again, how many Christians are there in these days who believe indeed in one part of the Creed—that Christ died and suffered—but quite put out of their hearts, and indeed cannot properly be said to believe another Article in the Creed, that HE shall come “to judge the quick and the dead,” and therefore among these to judge themselves?

But lastly, with regard to the third part of the Creed, of GOD the HOLY GHOST, and of that Holy Catholic Church in which HE has promised to dwell unto the end of the world, and of the Communion of Saints. Now all the miserable divisions and dissensions which rend to pieces the Church of CHRIST—that robe without seam or division—one throughout—all these which prevail, arise from this circumstance, that men having very much set aside the Creed from their thoughts, have forgotten the Holy Catholic Church, “the Church of the living GOD, the pillar and ground of the truth,” as St. Paul calls it⁸, and with that also the Communion of Saints. But on these points we cannot now dwell particularly.

It is sufficient for us to see, that if we would keep the faith as the first Christians did, or would return to it, then we must set aside no one single point of the faith; we must keep it whole and undivided: for as in keeping the commandments he that fails in one point is guilty of all, if we disbelieve any one single point of the faith once for all delivered unto the Saints, we cannot believe the other points rightly. Faith is indeed the great mark of the true Christian, but it is not a dead faith, but a faith by which he lives, and moves, and acts—all his conduct must be full of faith: and his faith must not be partial faith, choosing one

⁸ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

thing for himself to believe, and rejecting other points which God has equally revealed, but receiving them all alike as coming from God: for who are we in these days that we should thus choose one part of God's Revelation and set aside another? who is to say that we can reject any single part, and yet be sound in the Faith?

Be assured it is most necessary that the whole of the Belief should be constantly before us, should be daily repeated by us, if we would be safe in our Christian course amidst an evil world.

For this we must earnestly contend, says the Apostle, as if foreseeing a time when men would be indifferent respecting the faith, or, as our LORD said, when faith should be scarce found. In like manner St. Paul says to Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine:" "hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me. Keep by the HOLY GHOST that good thing which was committed unto thee⁹."

Again and again are we told in Holy Scripture that faith is all in all: it was this that marked all the Saints of God, which St. Paul recounts in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews. He repeats with great force of every one of them in that blessed catalogue, that army of martyrs, that it was by faith they overcame; in every one of them it was a faith that showed itself in their lives, and overcame the world; they acted up to all which God had revealed. But all these are adduced as examples to us who alone have the great objects of faith set before us in the Creed; and therefore the Christian religion is especially called "the faith," for we only have the Creed: those Saints whom St. Paul recounts had not; and therefore our SAVIOUR says, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see" those things which many "prophets and kings have desired to see," and have not seen; *i. e.*, because we have the great objects of faith set before us in the Creed.

And again, all our LORD's life in the flesh seemed especially to teach us, that we, as Christians, are to live entirely by faith: every miracle which our Blessed LORD performed, was according to the faith of those who came near to HIM; "according to your faith be it unto you¹," was His expression: great and wonderful

⁹ 2 Tim. i. 13, 14.

¹ Matt. ix. 29.

were the miracles which HE wrought when great was their faith ; and where there was no faith, then HE worked no miracle².

And what was the faith which HE required ? what was the faith on which HE said His Church would be built as upon a Rock ? It was this—on believing and confessing HIM to be the SON of GOD. For he who truly believes that JESUS CHRIST is the SON of GOD, must believe also the whole of the Creed : he must believe that the HOLY GHOST is GOD also ; for to sin against the HOLY GHOST is more unpardonable than to sin against the SON of MAN : and JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF speaks of HIM as One with HIMSELF and with the FATHER. The Christian is baptized in the Name of the Three Persons in one GOD, and as the Creed is nothing else but the explanation of this mystery, therefore he must believe all the Creed to believe aright.

Now how can we ever be sufficiently thankful for this great, this “unspeakable gift,” which GOD has given us in the Creed, that we may be sound in the faith unto the last ? May HE also of His infinite mercy grant us meek, teachable, and obedient hearts, that we may embrace and hold fast this faith of His Church, in which all the saints of old lived and died ; that we may live up to every part of it, and consider and take to heart those parts which have been so sadly forgotten in these days ; that we may thus live up to this faith,—and that as our Godfathers and Godmothers at our Baptism said “all this I steadfastly believe,” so we, when we come to die, may be able each of us to say again, “all this I steadfastly believe.” And so may we be able with a quiet hope and humble confidence to commit our souls into the hands of JESUS CHRIST. This was St. Paul’s ground of consolation and joy at the prospect of death, “I have fought a good fight. . . . I have kept the faith³.” He had no good works of his own which he could think of with comfort ; he says nothing of feeling a personal interest in CHRIST’s death ; but his hope was founded on this, that he had kept the faith. He had “fought a good fight,” because he had “kept the faith ;” because he had kept the faith, he had overcome the world.

² Mark vi. 5, 6.

³ 2 Tim. iv. 7.

SERMON CCLXXXII.

GOD'S HOLY WILL AND COMMANDMENTS.

MATT. v. 19.

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven : but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

THESE words of our Blessed LORD seem to refer to the commandments given in the Old Testament. HE had been saying that HE had not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil—that Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle shall pass from the Law till all be fulfilled. HE then adds these words, signifying that our place in the Kingdom of Heaven will depend on our doing and teaching, or not doing and teaching these commandments, and that to the utmost. And to this HE attaches that very striking declaration, that unless our righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Now the Scribes and Pharisees were, we know, very strict in the keeping of the Law, and yet it appears that not only does our condition in the eternal world depend on the strictness with which we keep the commandments, but also that unless we keep them in a manner quite different from, or rather by some fulfilment exceeding that of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall not enter into the Kingdom of God. This therefore is the important question, do we labour beyond all things to keep the commandments, and to teach others the necessity of doing so ? And do we keep them in a manner far beyond, far better than that of the Scribes and

Pharisees? But how is this to be? what was their righteousness? and how is ours to exceed theirs? That there may be no mistake on this matter our LORD HIMSELF proceeds to explain it; and HE takes two out of the ten commandments, as examples of what HE means—the Sixth and the Seventh. HE says it was said in the Old Testament, or “by them of old time, Thou shalt do no murder;” but HE tells us that HE, as Judge of the world, intends this commandment to extend to the very thoughts and words, so that although a man may never have committed murder, yet if he has entertained angry thoughts, or used angry words, he shall be in danger of the judgment and of hell-fire. And this is the reason why our Church, when this commandment is read (and after all the commandments), teaches us to pray that God will have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep it. To have mercy upon us; because although we have never committed murder, yet we have often broken that commandment in thought, word, or deed. And to incline our hearts to keep it; because, although we trust we shall never commit murder, yet that law is very hard to keep in spirit and in truth, and cannot be done without God’s especial grace. This therefore is the manner in which our righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees: they thought it enough to keep the commandment outwardly in the letter; we must keep it, not only outwardly in the letter, but also inwardly in the spirit; as unto God Who trieth the hearts, and Who will bring every idle word and every secret thing into judgment.

Here, therefore, it is most evident that our place in the eternal world does now depend entirely on the fidelity with which we keep the commandments with all our heart and soul; and that they who in any way teach men otherwise shall be placed the lowest in, that is, shall be shut out of, that kingdom.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, our LORD again puts this subject in the most striking way in which it could possibly be presented to us. HE describes two persons who hear the commandments as like two houses, which we may well imagine appear outwardly much the same, so that there is no reason from their external appearance to suppose any difference between the two; and they may continue to do so for some time, until the floods arise and the winds blow, and then it is found

that one has built his house on the rock, and the other on the sand; "and it fell, and great was the fall of it¹." And now, what does this difference consist in? what is the rock on which this house is built? Our LORD tells us, that the whole of this difference depends entirely upon our keeping the commandments: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock." . . . "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man who built his house upon the sand."

Now no one can mistake this parable: and there is hardly any part of Holy Scripture, but where something of the same kind is implied. But this vast difference may not much be seen in the eyes of men (for outwardly, we observed, there appears no difference between the house built on the rock, and that on the sand); and thus it is in cases and circumstances which our Lord describes; for we are required to keep the sayings of CHRIST not as a mere Pharisee, in the letter only, and before men, but as a Christian, in heart and thought, as unto God, Who seeth in secret.

There is an incident mentioned in the Gospels, which may tend to set forth this subject to us in a very forcible and lively manner. We read that on one occasion a young man² came running and kneeling to our LORD, and put to HIM the very best question that can engage the hearts of us all: what he should do to obtain eternal life? and our LORD's reply was, that if he wished to enter into life, he must keep the commandments. And on our LORD's telling him what commandments HE meant, namely, the ten commandments of Moses, of which our LORD mentioned the latter six to him, "All these things," said the young man, "I have kept from my youth up." Now there appears every reason to suppose that this young man was quite sincere in what he said; he was evidently a very well-disposed person; he came to our LORD with great signs of respect; though a rich man he came kneeling to HIM, he spoke to HIM with reverence, saying, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do?" and our LORD "beholding him, loved him³." He thought he had kept the commandments because he had kept them

¹ Matt. vii. 27.

² Ibid. xix. 16. 22.

³ Mark x. 21.

according to the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, *i. e.* in the letter. He had never committed murder nor adultery. And yet it is very clear that he had not kept the commandments in that way in which they must be kept by us all ; for if he had, he would have entered into life : but instead of that “ he went away sorrowful,” he was not accepted. For our LORD, the heart-searching GOD, put the trial to him by telling him to sell all that he had, and give to the poor : for a Christian cannot keep the commandments without loving his neighbour as himself, and if he had this love to his neighbour he would not have had this difficulty in obeying CHRIST’s command of giving to the poor. Here was an instance of one who had indeed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, but he had no more, and therefore he could not enter into the kingdom. He had not the love of his neighbour, therefore he could not have kept the commandments as a Christian must do.

Now, many Christians are so ignorant, even of their Catechism, that when they come to die, they say that they have kept God’s commandments, or most of them ; that they have never broken the sixth, nor the seventh, nor the eighth commandment, because they have never committed murder, nor adultery, nor stolen ; and yet, in thought and spirit, they may have broken these laws all their life long ; therefore, it is evident that all the righteousness which they have thought of at all, is no other than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, which is not sufficient for any one who would enter into Heaven.

For the keeping of the commandments depends upon the heart, upon the spirit and intention in which all things are done, more than upon the mere outward action alone.

It is, therefore, no easy or ordinary matter we undertake at our Baptism ; that we would “ keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our life.” But it is, in fact, for this great purpose that we are baptized and born again ; it is the reason why all the objects of faith are set before us, and faith is so much required of us. It is, indeed, for this object that CHRIST gave HIMSELF for us all, that HE might “ purify unto HIMSELF a peculiar people zealous of good works⁴,”

⁴ Titus ii. 14.

in order that we might live "in newness of life;" in order that we might have strength to fulfil the Law.

And, therefore, our Blessed LORD, in the parable of the vine⁵, when HE speaks of us as being branches in HIMSELF and members of HIMSELF, HE dwells upon it throughout with an especial reference to bearing fruit and to the keeping of His commandments. HE speaks in almost every verse of bearing fruit. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in ME." "He that abideth in ME and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." "Herein is My FATHER glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be My disciples." And afterwards, in the same chapter, again and again, how does our LORD repeat these injunctions of keeping His commandments? It is to this one subject HE is always returning. "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My FATHER's commandments, and abide in His love." And soon afterwards, "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." And again; "I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

And if our Blessed SAVIOUR was always dwelling on this one point beyond all things, that we should keep His commandments, we need not be surprised that His "beloved disciple" afterwards, who records this of his LORD, should show a like anxiety. We find St. John, in his letters, is always dwelling on the same subject; he says, "Hereby do we know that we know HIM, if we keep His commandments." "He that saith, I know HIM, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar." And, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." And, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous."

But, more than all, whenever the Day of Judgment is spoken of in Holy Scripture, or the account is given of what shall then take place, it is to impress upon us a deep sense that we shall be judged according to our works.

"Many will say to ME in that day," says our Blessed SAVIOUR,

⁵ John xv.

“LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in Thy Name, and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from ME, ye that work iniquity⁶.” Here we find that they who are rejected on that day will have high profession, and great assurance; but why will they be rejected? Our LORD tells us plainly, because they have not kept the commandments: “*ye that work iniquity.*”

We are told in every way that that judgment will be strictly according to our works; that “we must all appear before the Judgment seat of CHRIST, that we may receive the things done in the body⁷,” that “God will bring every work into judgment with every secret thing⁸,” that according as a man soweth, so shall he reap; “he that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully⁹.”

And thus, likewise, do all the parables respecting that awful Day set before us the same thing. When the Bridegroom shall return, there are five wise virgins, and five foolish: the wise are those that have their loins girded and their lamps burning, and they themselves like unto servants that wait for their Lord. What is all this but a description of those who are engaged in watching, and praying, and doing the work of GOD,—in waiting for HIM? Or, again, what is the servant who is found without the wedding-garment when the King returns to the wedding, but he who by evil deeds has soiled his white robe of Baptism¹, he who is without works of obedience? When the Judge announces His coming, what are His words? “My reward is with ME, to give every man according as his work shall be.” And, “Blessed are they that do His commandments².”

And it may be further observed, that in all the accounts of the Judgment, they are not sins of commission so much as sins of omission which are mentioned, *i. e.* in the accounts our LORD has given us, HE does not speak so much of persons being shut out of heaven for crimes, as for not doing the work enjoined them. Thus, in the parable of the talents³, the judgment is exactly according to the use made of the talents; those who have made the best use

⁶ Matt. vii. 23.

⁷ 2 Cor. v. 10.

⁸ Eccles. xii. 14.

⁹ 2 Cor. ix. 6.

¹ Rev. xvi. 15.

² Rev. xxii. 12. 14.

³ Matt. xxv. 14. 27.

receive the greatest reward, and he who is cast out is the *unprofitable* servant, he who had kept his talent laid up in a napkin, and had made no improvement of it³. And, again, when our LORD speaks still more openly and forcibly of His making the separation between all mankind, as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; those who are accepted are those who fear they shall not be accepted, but who have in fact all their lives been doing every work of charity: those who are rejected come with high confidence, thinking they shall not be rejected, but will be shut out from God's mercy, because they have neglected to do all those works of mercy themselves: "inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to ME⁴." Here our Lord clearly states that this thing alone, whether they have done these works or not, will make all this difference on that great Day. He mentions particularly every work of charity, visiting the sick and the prisoners, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, and the like. The judgment is made to depend entirely upon this. And those who have neglected to do these works shall go away into everlasting punishment; "but the righteous," *i. e.* as it is here fully explained in the account given of them, they who have done these works, "into life eternal."

You see there is every variety in the different parables in which our LORD sets before us that great Day of account; it is said that the Kingdom of Heaven, which shall then be revealed, is like the case of the wise and foolish virgins; or it is like the servant without the wedding-garment; or it is like servants who, during their masters' absence, have talents lent them; or it is as separating the sheep from the goats; or it is like the house on the rock, and the house built on the sand—but in all this variety the figure or expression used is only to impress upon us this one thing,—that we shall be judged according to our works, according to our keeping the commandments.

And this may show us another point of which our Catechism reminds us, and which we promised at our Baptism, *viz.*, that we will "keep God's Holy Will and Commandments, and walk in the same," not after any fancied conversion or call late in life, but "all the days of our life." For whenever the Day of judgment is spoken

³ Luke xix. 20.

⁴ Matt. xxv. 45.

of it is never said that one part of our life will be taken and not the other ; but the judgment will be upon all our works throughout, all our life. It is not merely what we may say, or think, or do, when we see death staring us in the face, or on our sick beds ; but all our life. All our life long will be taken into the account at that judgment. It is not merely the Sunday which God will require to be spent in His service, in the love of HIM and to His glory, but all the days of the week. It is not the year which is past⁵ alone for which we shall have to give account, but the year to come also. Not only the week that is past, but that which we are now beginning. Not only yesterday, but to-day also, and to-morrow.

We are often told in manifold ways throughout the Scriptures that there is nothing substantial, nothing true, real, and lasting, but obedience to God. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof ; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." "The Heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old as doth a garment," "but My salvation," "but My righteousness"—Christian righteousness that is—or the righteous in whom CHRIST dwells, "shall be for ever," "shall not be abolished⁶." "The grass withereth, the flower thereof falleth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever⁷."

So is it with regard to ourselves, to each one of us, all that appertains to this life, our riches and comforts, our good character with the world, our relations and friends, nay, our very bodies themselves, and all our learning and acquirements, shall depart and are already departing :—the grass withereth, the flower thereof falleth away. But all we have done for good or for evil shall abide for ever. The good works we may have done by God's grace, the prayers, and fastings, and alms, in the past year shall not pass away nor be forgotten. Consider then what things are written down in God's Book for the year that is gone ; what thoughts, and words, and deeds, of covetousness, of pride, of uncleanness, of worldly carefulness : and remember that they are written in our own souls also, and there God reads it all, whenever He looks upon us.

I will add one observation more for our comfort : if we must

⁵ Preached on New Year's Day.

⁶ Is. li. 6. 8.

⁷ 1 Pet. i. 24, 25.

keep the Law, yet love will make it easy to do so. When the people saw Moses on his coming down from the Mount with the two tables, his face shone, "and they were afraid to come nigh him⁸." Not so when CHRIST came down from the Mount of Transfiguration: "straightway all the people, when they beheld HIM, were greatly amazed;" but they "ran to HIM, and saluted" or embraced "HIM⁹;" so much grace and love was no doubt blended with the glory that was on His countenance. And a little before on the Mount, though they "were sore afraid," yet they said, "Master, it is good for us to be here."

⁸ Exod. xxxii. 29.

⁹ Mark ix. 15.

SERMON CCLXXXIII.

GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND
EARTH.

JAMES ii. 23.

“ Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God.”

THOSE Saints of God which are set before us for our imitation, in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, may all be considered as examples of persons who believed in God the FATHER: for God the SON and God the HOLY GHOST were not distinctly revealed to them; they had no knowledge of the Three Persons in one God, as revealed to us in the New Testament.

Of these Saints no one is so remarkable, and no one is so much held out to us as an example of faith in God the FATHER as Abraham. There is no way in which we are taught the truth so powerfully as by example: perhaps, therefore, there is no way in which we can learn more profitably what it is to “believe in God the FATHER ALMIGHTY, Maker of Heaven and earth,” than by considering how this faith was shown in the character and throughout the life of the faithful Abraham. He was set before the Jews as their father, and for whose sake they were to all generations accepted of God: and nothing could have been so pleasing to God, as that they should be like their father the faithful Abraham. And he is also set before us Christians quite as much as before the Jews, for in being like him we shall be esteemed of God the true children of the faithful Abraham: and as he is

called the father of the faithful, this means especially that he is the father of those who are to live by faith, viz. of Christians¹.

Now we must remember how very little knowledge Abraham had, compared with what we have : he knew nothing of all those things which every one of us have known ever since we knew any thing—of God's great mercies in JESUS CHRIST, of the wonderful love shown in the life and death of our SAVIOUR, and of the good things which GOD hath prepared for them that love HIM. But he knew that there was a GOD, he knew that that GOD was the Maker of Heaven and earth, and must needs be almighty : and his own good heart told him that such a GOD would "reward those who would diligently seek HIM ;" that somehow or other to obey that GOD at the sacrifice of all things, would in the end be to his great blessing.

But in so thinking and acting he was evidently quite singular, for in those days, as now, the way that leadeth unto life was narrow, and few had any anxious care to find it. The people all around him were falling away more and more in their practice, and then in their knowledge of the true GOD ; and at length lost in all kind of corruption. It was then that GOD saw this faithful man ; in what way HE had tried and proved him from the first is not mentioned, but no doubt Abraham had already made himself very acceptable and dear to GOD, when HE called him to leave his country, and his father's house and kindred, to go to a distant land which GOD promised to give him. In what way GOD made known this command to him does not appear ; but the whole of it was so done that it should be a great trial to Abraham's faith : he was called upon to give up every thing, on account of some future and apparently not very clear or certain promise. For so the Apostle describes it—"by faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed ; and he went out, not knowing whither he went²." He seems from the account to have obeyed most cheerfully and gladly, as if it were no great hardship to him to give up every thing, on account of the greatness of his trust in GOD. The peace of a good conscience, a sincere and hearty love of the great ALMIGHTY GOD Who made Heaven and earth, and a full confidence

¹ Gal. iii. 7. 9. 14. 29.

² Heb. xi. 8.

in HIM, seem to have made all hardships so easy to him, that not one of them is mentioned or thought of. And there is another circumstance which must have been a peculiar trial to him—that he must have appeared to all around him as if he were acting very foolishly; for he was giving up all the advantages which they so highly prized, for a mere uncertainty, and promises of things as yet unseen.

But a still further trial awaited him; for when he had arrived at this promised land, he found it filled with strangers and enemies: as St. Stephen says, “HE gave him no inheritance in it; no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet HE promised that HE would give it to him for a possession³.” But the faithful Abraham was so far from being disconcerted at this—at having given up all things, and then after a long journey finding nothing but future promises—that it seems rather to have raised his hope, being well assured that “the FATHER ALMIGHTY, Maker of Heaven and earth,” had something far better for those that wait for HIM. “By faith,” says St. Paul, “he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country,” for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose “Builder and Maker is God.” Looking for something far more enduring and more worthy of the promises of the Great God than all things that he saw, “he went on his way rejoicing.”

And this his indifference to all temporal advantages he shewed some time after, for when a dispute arose between his herdsmen and those of Lot his nephew, and it was made necessary for them to separate, he gave his nephew the choice of whichever country he liked best, although he might have fairly claimed it for himself for every reason; but he was quite indifferent about such things: “if thou wilt take the left hand,” said he, “then I will go to the right: or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.” But Lot was of a different mind, he chose out the best, the fertile land of Sodom and Gomorrah, which was “like the garden of the LORD;” and he soon found the fruits of his choice⁴.

But, as years went on, a still more difficult trial awaited the faithful Abraham; for all the promises of God were of things future; with regard to that land, his seed were to inherit it, and

³ Acts vii. 5.

⁴ Gen. xiii. 9, 10.

become a great nation; and in him should all families in the earth be blessed. For all his life of obedience he had nothing but future hopes. And these promises of the Great God did, to all appearances, now seem to fail him; for his wife was barren, and both of them were now advanced in years; so that, humanly speaking, it appeared quite impossible that he should have any heir at all. But what effect had this on the father of the faithful? Surely it might be thought he had some reason to despair, and to complain; but not so, it seemed to raise his thoughts in wonder and adoration to the Great Being Whom he so faithfully and gladly served; wondering rather with a mysterious feeling of delight and curiosity at what that great and good thing could be which God had for him, when, to all earthly appearances, His promises seemed to fail. For we read, "After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, LORD GOD, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me THOU hast given no seed; and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir ⁵."

Even after this, when he had the son of his old age miraculously born, and he was descending to the grave, the trials of this faithful saint were not over; for he had throughout experienced what the wise man hath said, "My son, if thou come to serve the LORD, prepare thy soul for temptation." Surely no mortal man ever yet had to endure such a fiery trial as that which followed, when we read that God said to him, "Abraham; and he said, Behold, here I am. And HE said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest; and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of ⁶." Here might it have appeared as if all his fond hopes for future generations, all his love and treasure, was at once to be dashed to the ground, and that too by his own hand, imbrued in the blood of his own dear and only son. How might he in grief and dismay have fancied that some evil spirit had been deceiving him all his life, to overwhelm him at the close! What a thousand excuses would

⁵ Gen. xv. 1. 3.

⁶ Ibid. xxii. 11.

come to other men on such a command! Surely, at least, they would say, this is a matter to be considered; a little delay, at all events, is most necessary; if men submit to such painful tasks, yet it is with a faltering heart and heavy hand.

Not so the good old man who was "the friend of God:" he set about it as if the very painfulness and costliness of the duty to the Great God Whom he loved, made him in haste about a task well-pleasing to HIM; like that other man after God's own heart, who said, "I will not offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing⁷." It seems as if he had said all his life,—All that I do to serve the great and good God is as nothing: I am "but dust and ashes⁸" before HIM, yet HE deigns to visit me. Would that I could show my deep and overflowing love for HIM, by something more than I ever yet have done! For immediately after this command of God he set about it as if it was no trial to him, but a delightful service from the greatness of his faith: "Abraham rose up early in the morning and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son." The very expression of "rising up early," is used in Scripture to imply great zeal and earnestness. And if this trial was the most severe of all trials that men have undergone, surely never was fuller acceptance of God expressed. "And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of Heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from ME." And soon after we read, "And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of Heaven the second time, and said, By Myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven," "and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed: because thou hast obeyed My voice." Surely this acceptance of ALMIGHTY God is like that which shall be said to the children of the faithful Abraham at the last, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy

⁷ 1 Kings xxiv. 24.

⁸ Gen. xviii. 27.

LORD." "Come, ye blessed children of My FATHER, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Then might he indeed say, "I have fought a good fight," "I have kept the faith."

But now these are not by any means all the points in which the faith of Abraham was tried and shown, of which we read in Scripture. As he is the father of the faithful, and as so very much is said in the Bible concerning faith as the one thing needful for a Christian, it seems as if it was intended to show all Christians by the example of Abraham what true faith really is ; that faith which "overcometh the world." We see in Abraham how it is that faith thus overcomes all those temptations which the world presents ; how fruitful it is in good works, or rather how it is in fact the very same thing, and but another name for good works and obedience : "Because thou hast obeyed My voice," said the LORD to him as the reason of his being so accepted and blessed. And again, "Now I know that thou fearest God," said the LORD to him on his fulfilling that wonderful act of obedience. "I know him," said God, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment⁹." His whole life was altogether faith working by love. In the faith of Abraham was to be found every grace and virtue that can adorn the Christian. If we want an instance of honesty and fair dealing, you will find it in faithful Abraham treating with the children of Heth for the cave of Machpelah ; if you seek for an example of liberality, you will find it in faithful Abraham in his dealings with Lot, giving up to him the better share ; in his refusing to receive any thing from the King of Sodom when he saved him and all that he had ; for liberality is quite as much shown in refusing to receive as in giving. If you seek for hospitality, whereby "some have entertained angels unawares," the great instance spoken of by the Apostle¹⁰ you will find in faithful Abraham. If you seek for an instance of love for others, you will find it in faithful Abraham interceding again and again for the wicked Sodom. If you seek for an instance of affectionate kindness and good temper at home, you will find it in faithful Abraham in the disputes of his wife and his two sons. And above all things, where shall we find

⁹ Gen. xviii. 19.

¹⁰ Heb. xiii. 2.

such godly fear and humiliation as in faithful Abraham, calling himself dust and ashes before GOD, and before men and strangers bowing himself to the ground? So that faith in Abraham was but one word for every sort of goodness and obedience in all things.

But now we must remember that Abraham knew very little compared with what we Christians know. St. Paul indeed says, that the Scripture “preached before the Gospel unto Abraham¹,” and our Blessed SAVIOUR says that Abraham rejoiced to see His day, “and he saw it, and was glad².” But this does not seem to imply that Abraham had any clear or distinct notions of the life of our SAVIOUR, or of His death; only that, in some general way, GOD had made known to him His great mercies which HE had in store for mankind. What Abraham had was a very deep and heartfelt assurance of the Power, and the Justice, and the Mercy of ALMIGHTY GOD, the FATHER and the Maker of all things; and we may observe, that, although St. Paul says that Abraham looked for a city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is GOD, yet we do not read that GOD laid before him the great rewards and punishments of a future life, Heaven and Hell, and Judgment to come, in the way that HE has since done to mankind. And although no doubt Abraham had a saving faith in GOD through CHRIST, yet his knowledge even of GOD the FATHER was not such as we have, “for no man knoweth the FATHER save the SON, and he to whomsoever the SON will reveal HIM³.” He was one of those prophets and kings who desired to see the things that we see, and saw them not.

If any man now had the little knowledge of Abraham and his great faith, then he would search diligently till he found out all the will of GOD as it has been revealed unto mankind, and all the treasures that are hid in CHRIST, in His Gospel, and in His Church: but Abraham had no such means to turn to. He felt assured that there was a GOD Who was his Maker, and committed the keeping of his soul unto HIM in well doing as unto a faithful CREATOR.

Our life is indeed a sort of counterpart to that of this holy Patriarch: or rather, his life was made to be a sort of type or shadow

¹ Gal. iii. 8.

² John viii. 56.

³ Matt. xi. 27.

of ours—we at Baptism are called to renounce the world, to travel on as strangers and pilgrims unto a Heavenly country which God has promised: we too are called to trust God contrary to all appearances of present advantage: we too are called to make sacrifices for the sake of God: to cut off the right hand; to pluck out the right eye; not to count our life dear unto ourselves, so long as we may finish our course with joy. But, alas! such is the state of the Christian world, that if a man would be in heart and life a Christian in all things, he must, like Abraham of old, be singular, and, as it were, get up and leave the Christian world, all its ways of thinking and practices, as Abraham did the Heathen world of old. Christians have the knowledge of God the SON, and God the HOLY GHOST, in Whose Name, together with That of the FATHER, they have been baptized: but many of them live as if they did not know even God the FATHER: they are so far from being Christians, that they have even to learn what is called natural religion, honesty and fair dealing, natural piety and chastity.

Take one point alone in the history of faithful Abraham. He was particularly pleasing to God for what might be called his household religion: “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD.” Now there is nothing which more strongly marks these days among rich and poor than a want of household religion; so much so, that if children learned no more of religion than they learn from their parents, they would, in many cases, learn nothing at all. There has been of late years a great demand and outcry for schools, more than ever there has been before. But why is this? The reason is that children are and long have been so neglected at home, and so ruined by the careless lives of their parents, that unless something is done by others to teach them, we shall soon lose every appearance of Christianity: so much so that it has of late been publicly stated that, in parts of this kingdom where there are no schools, particularly in the manufacturing districts, there are men who have never heard, I will not say never heard of CHRIST and His Church, but never heard of the existence of a God. This want of household religion is no doubt the chief cause of the great corruption which prevails. It is quite a new thing in the Christian Church for people never

to think of meeting together for public prayer excepting on Sundays : such a religion as this was never known till of late years. What is the reason of this ? no doubt it arises in great measure from the decay of religion in households. To come home to ourselves. How many masters of families are there in this parish who bring their families together daily for household prayer ? How can any man ever teach religion to his children without this ? Or what can schools ever do to supply the want of this ? How can people ever think of daily public prayer, when they have given up and forgotten even family prayer ?

Let us remember, we are now the children of the kingdom, as the Israelites were of old ; they prided themselves much on being the children of Abraham, and of all the promises in consequence being theirs : they were told, and warned in vain, that they were not the true children of Abraham, for the true children of Abraham were those who lived by faith, and walked in the steps of their father Abraham. Let us take heed lest those who had very far less knowledge and less privileges than we have had, rise up in the last Day to condemn us ; and we, who are now the inheritors of the promises, be cast out as the Jews were, and that come upon us which our Saviour said of the Jews, “ Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness ⁴.”

⁴ Matt. viii. 11, 12.

SERMON CCLXXXIV.

JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD.

1 JOHN iv. 15.

“Whosoever shall confess that JESUS is the SON of GOD, GOD dwelleth in him, and he in GOD.”

ON a late occasion we saw what faith in GOD the FATHER might be, as affecting the whole life and character, in the history of Abraham. We may now in the same manner consider what it is to believe in GOD the SON, and for this purpose I would take, not the example of a single person only, as the above out of the Old Testament, but rather the conduct of different persons in the Gospels as shown in their approaches to our LORD. We know indeed from the Church, and from many passages in the New Testament, that to believe in CHRIST as the SON of GOD is the one great point on which our salvation depends, and it is often put as containing within it all other doctrine. For indeed no one can come to the FATHER but by the SON¹, nor can any man know the FATHER save the SON, and he to whomsoever the SON will reveal HIM². It is therefore often put alone, as, “he that believeth not the SON shall not see life, but the wrath of GOD abideth on him³.” “He that hath the SON hath life, and he that hath not the SON of GOD hath not life⁴.” It is the great requisite at baptizing: “I believe that JESUS CHRIST is the SON of GOD⁵.” It is the object of preaching; of St. Paul on his conversion it is said, that “he preached CHRIST in the synagogues, that HE is

¹ John xiv. 6.

² Matt. xi. 27.

³ John iii. 36.

⁴ 1 John v. 12.

⁵ Acts viii. 37.

the SON of GOD⁶." It is the object for which the Gospels are written, "that ye might believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, the SON of GOD⁷." It is the one thing our LORD demands, "Dost thou believe in the SON of GOD⁸?" But what I now purpose is to observe how this is set before us by living instances in Holy Scripture.

For if we look into the gospels, and consider the persons there brought before us, and their condition in the eyes of the All-seeing God, we find every kind of difference, such as may be found in all mankind at the last; some are in a higher degree of acceptance than others, in every possible way; and some in a greater degree of condemnation, more or less; if we may judge from the manner in which they were treated by JESUS CHRIST, and the words HE spoke to them. We shall find that all this depends on their faith in CHRIST: there is, indeed, a vast difference in men's lives and characters as there described, but still we find that all this difference is connected with the belief of CHRIST's Godhead; this was the foundation on which all their characters and dispositions were built.

For instance, among those who came before HIM in their wants and distresses, perhaps we shall hardly find one accepted of CHRIST in a more remarkable manner than the Centurion, on his entreating our LORD that HE would heal his slave who was sick of the palsy⁹. Not venturing to come himself, as being a Gentile, he sent the elders of the Jews, and they spoke very strongly in praise of the Centurion; saying that he loved their nation and had built them a synagogue, and was worthy for whom HE should do this; requesting CHRIST that HE would come to the place to heal his slave. But very different from this were the thoughts of this Gentile captain; while the Jews were talking of his worthiness, he was himself at home overwhelmed with a sense of his own deep unworthiness in the sight of the All-seeing God, Whom he knew CHRIST to be; and when he heard that the LORD was actually coming to his house, forgetting all his own distress he hastily sent forth friends to meet HIM, not presuming himself to appear before HIM; and through these

⁶ Acts ix. 20.

⁷ John xx. 31.

⁸ John ix. 35.

⁹ Luke vii. :

friends he entreated that our LORD would not come, for as he had not thought himself worthy to approach HIM, neither did he think himself worthy that CHRIST should enter under his roof; "but speak the word only," said he, "and my servant shall be healed." This was different from the Jewish elders; they stood erect, as it were, before CHRIST, and thought indeed that HE had power to come to the place and heal, but not power so Divine as this. And the Centurion goes on to explain what he meant by attributing so much to the word of CHRIST; saying in great humility that though he himself was under the authority of another, yet he said "to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this," and his orders were immediately executed at his very words: by this he meant to imply that even in this manner whatever CHRIST commanded would be instantly performed: on this it is said that our LORD "marvelled at him;" looked with admiration and love on this wonderful expression of confiding faith, beyond what HE had found in Israel; and spoke of the Gentiles coming from the East and West, and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of GOD¹; and in confirmation of this prophecy HE sent word to the Centurion that it should be to him according to his belief: he believed great and wonderful things of CHRIST, no less than Almighty Power and Godhead; and he should receive according to this his belief. The genuineness of his extraordinary faith was seen, we may observe, in an extraordinary humility.

To take another case: very gracious words of acceptance were those to the woman of Canaan, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt²." But in what was the greatness of her faith so remarkable, but that she thought great things of CHRIST the GOD of Israel, and had very lowly thoughts of herself, worshipping HIM and falling down at His feet, and only asking for some little share of His overflowing mercies to Israel, as the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table? Both of these looked upon CHRIST as that GOD of Whom the Psalmist says, "THOU art about my path and about my bed," as All-powerful and every where present; and we may observe that when persons

¹ Matt. viii. 11.

² Ibid. xv. 28.

believed any thing less than this, they were reprov'd of CHRIST as not having sufficient faith: even the good Mary and her sister Martha seem'd to fall short when they said, "LORD, if THOU hadst been here, my brother had not died;" and "even now," said Martha, "I know that whatsoever THOU wilt ask of GOD, GOD will give it THEE:" but this was not enough; our LORD would not work so great a miracle till she confess'd more fully; "Yea, LORD; I believe that THOU art the CHRIST, the SON of GOD³." And when the Jewish nobleman from Capernaum⁴ said, "Come down ere my child die," our LORD reprov'd his want of faith, saying, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." HE was not content with such a faith as this, that implied HE was any thing less than that GOD, Who in the beginning spake the Word, and all things were made.

There is, perhaps, no instance in the Gospels but what may tend to show in like manner that all acceptance depends on a right estimation of our LORD's Divinity; and to lead men to this, all our LORD's works are directed.

Take again the case of the Apostles themselves: our LORD led them on more and more to the fuller manifestation of HIMSELF as they were able to bear it, working miracles before them, and sometimes giving proofs of His Divine power, for themselves especially; as when alone with them on the sea, or by land; and then at last, after they had been with HIM for almost three years, often reprov'g them for want of faith, and sometimes welcoming any indications of it, HE asked them in a retir'd place, Whom they said HE was? and on St. Peter confessing that HE was "the SON of the living GOD⁵," our LORD accepted him with marked and exceeding blessedness, saying, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My FATHER which is in Heaven;" and HE proceeded to say that on this Rock His Church should be built, and the gates of Hell should not prevail against it. Whether we consider St. Peter to be meant by this Rock, or whether we apply it to the doctrine of our LORD's Godhead, in either case, in this respect, it comes to the same thing; for, if it is understood of St. Peter himself, it is on account of his holding this doctrine; or if this

³ John xi. 27.⁴ Ibid. iv. 46.⁵ Matt. xvi. 16.

doctrine is intended, it means the doctrine which St. Peter held; so that whoever believes this truth, partakes also of that blessedness pronounced on St. Peter. Moreover, it may be observed, that both before and after this time, whenever the Apostles failed, or showed weakness and infirmity, it was from not sufficiently taking hold on this doctrine. For we find that after a person had known this truth, he had still to learn and understand it more fully: it was not taking it up because men said it, or because evil spirits confessed it; for flesh and blood could not communicate it in this saving way, because it could only be thus revealed by the FATHER of Lights. And when the disciples had known and confessed it, they still had failings as weak in faith until they came to receive it better. When they found the fig-tree withered according to His word, our LORD said, "Have faith in GOD⁶;" and even at the Last Supper HE said unto them, "Do ye now believe⁷?" as if they were only beginning to believe then; and HE told them that the HOLY GHOST should more fully reveal HIM to them: so that they had always to come more and more to the depth and fulness of this knowledge. It was forgetting this that made St. Peter sink when walking on the waves, when our LORD said to him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt⁸?" it was from losing sight of this truth which he had already confessed, that St. Peter drew his sword to defend HIM, and afterwards denied his LORD.

Nor was this the case with the good only, but also with the bad; for, to take a very different instance, why did Judas sell his LORD for thirty pieces of silver? Surely, though he was covetous and malicious, and had a devil, yet it was evident that it arose from his not having a living practical sense of our LORD's Godhead, as the holy father St. Augustin has observed. Or, again, why were the Pharisees so set against the HOLY JESUS, when they could not deny the truth of His miracles, nor the excellency of His doctrine? Our LORD HIMSELF will explain why it was: the last time HE taught them (it was in the Temple about two days before His death), after answering all their questions, and doing away with all their objections, HE HIMSELF pointed out to them one particular passage in the Old Testament

⁶ Mark xi. 22.⁷ John xvi. 31.⁸ Matt. xiv. 31.

respecting CHRIST, asking them why David in spirit called HIM LORD⁹. Now, what did this mean? Our LORD evidently wished the Jews to consider some great truth which they had quite lost sight of, and the due consideration of which would have removed their unbelief and wickedness; that, although CHRIST was indeed the Son of David, yet that David himself called HIM LORD, which could not be if HE had not been God. And, again, on the night on which HE was condemned, it was this great truth of His being the SON of GOD which HE brought forth, and they would not receive¹. It was this that sealed their doom, and brought on His death by their unbelief. The greatest crime, therefore, that ever was committed upon earth arose from not believing in the Godhead of CHRIST.

This is a subject on which the world is apt to think very differently from the Church; for men in general, if left to themselves, are disposed to think that it matters but little, and that a man is hardly responsible for his belief at all; but the Church has always spoken on this subject in a way they cannot understand, when it says, "that except a man believe faithfully" the doctrine of the Catholic faith "he cannot be saved."

I am not at present going to prove from Scripture, or the Church, that CHRIST is the SON of GOD, but merely to show from the Gospels how the holding it or not holding it is all in all to us. We confess this truth—so far is well: but we are not to suppose that we do sufficiently embrace it. It is the very highest gift which cometh down from above: the natural man cannot attain to it; the spiritual man can only so far know it as he is spiritual; the very best of men has to labour to learn it daily, as if he had never before understood it: the whole conduct must be affected by it: we find that trust in money or some earthly object can absorb and take up the whole man, how much more faith in JESUS CHRIST as GOD?

I have said nothing of those Names and Attributes of CHRIST, of which the Creed in this part speaks, as "JESUS," or Joshua, GOD the SAVIOUR of His people; how the very Name of GOD the SAVIOUR sets before us our sinful state, our danger, and the greatness of our delivery: "CHRIST," *i. e.* the Anointed of GOD,

⁹ Matt. xxii. 43.¹ Luke xxii. 70.

Anointed as Prophet, Priest, and King; Anointed not with hands, but by the Eternal Anointing of the FATHER; "Thy Throne, O GOD, is for ever and ever;" "GOD, even thy GOD, hath Anointed THEE with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows²;" how HE is the Well-Beloved SON of GOD from everlasting; and how HE is especially manifested to us as "our LORD." For our right apprehension of these things does after all depend on our belief of His Godhead: then it is, when we rightly apprehend this, that HE becomes to us GOD the SAVIOUR; then it is that the anointing of the HOLY GHOST makes us also to be children of GOD, and, as Scripture says, Prophets, Priests, and Kings³: then it is that we apprehend HIM rightly to be the Only-Begotten of the FATHER, and our LORD in such sense as that we shall not say to HIM, LORD! LORD! in vain.

In the image of GOD was man made in the beginning, and to this image must he be restored, which can only be by the SON of GOD coming down from Heaven, that we may be made like unto HIM.

Let us bring this awful subject home to ourselves in the most real and practical way from the Gospel narrative we have been considering. Is it not true that we are all of us labouring more or less under some malady or spiritual weakness of the soul, such as were represented in those bodily diseases of which men were healed? and does not the Gospel set before us in a most forcible manner the way by which we may escape? Or if we begin to sink in the water, if tempted to deny CHRIST, or even to betray HIM for the love of money; yet, if we look to CHRIST with the temper of those who were accepted by HIM of old, the same succour will be afforded us. If duly impressed with the majesty of GOD we shall be as Peter when he fell down before HIM, saying, "I am a sinful man, O LORD;" or as the centurion saying, "LORD, I am not worthy that THOU shouldest enter under my roof;" or as the trembling woman that touched the hem of His garment, not venturing to speak to HIM: we shall be, I mean, of that temper of mind which these incidents serve to express, and shall feel a great awe at His presence whenever it is vouchsafed, or when HE enters into the house of the soul at the Holy

² Heb. i. 8, 9.

³ Rev. i. 6. Acts ii. 17.

Eucharist. There is no greater sign of reprobation than not to think with awe of CHRIST.

It is hardly possible to say enough of what it should be to us to read of CHRIST in the Gospels; the ALMIGHTY GOD comes so near to us, becomes visible to us as Man, so that we may see His countenance and hear His voice; and yet in every thing in which HE so wonderfully draws near to us as Man there are indications of His Godhead also; so that we must "rejoice with trembling." For this reason how awful is HE in His sufferings; how full of human sympathy in His miracles! We can never behold HIM as GOD only, nor as Man only, but always as GOD and Man. The body of man is seen, but his soul is not seen; and yet there cannot be a man without both of these together: and so in like manner GOD and Man is one CHRIST. In what was seen HE was as Man; in what was not seen HE was as GOD; and yet never otherwise than GOD and Man. As born of a woman HE was as Man; as born of a virgin HE was as GOD. When HE slept in the ship it was as Man; when HE walked on the waves it was as GOD: when HE hungered it was as Man; when HE fed the five thousand it was as GOD: when HE prayed it was as Man; when HE answered prayers it was as GOD: when HE wept at Lazarus' grave it was as Man; when HE cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" it was as GOD: and again, when HE died it was as Man, when HE uttered the loud voice in dying it was as GOD: And yet in all things as GOD and Man, never more to be divided.

But this subject of our LORD as "GOD and Man, yet one CHRIST," and of the WORD made Flesh, more properly belongs to the next Article of the Creed. Here it will be enough to observe with what awe and adoration we must ever read and think of JESUS CHRIST as the SON of GOD, and worship HIM as our LORD. This is a point on which it is not necessary to wait till we become older, or more advanced in learning; it will not do here to say we are "no scholars," and so put it away: for the Scribes and Pharisees, though very learned in the Scriptures, comprehended it not; while the most ignorant, very "babes," as they are called, received it. The education which is now so much talked of, cannot teach us this; and yet it is the only thing in the world worth learning: all other wisdom and knowledge is utterly worth-

less in comparison with the unspeakable excellency of this knowledge. A life of obedience and devotion will teach it, and nothing else. To hear and read of CHRIST, or to hear and read CHRIST's words without obeying HIM, and seeking HIM, will bring a cloud over this knowledge; and if long persisted in will put it out, never to be kindled again, even as foul bad air will extinguish a candle's light. Impurity, or covetousness, or hatred, if indulged in, will make the eyes unable to see, the ears dull of hearing, and the heart incapable of understanding, as the Bible assures us throughout: but incapable of understanding what? unable to see and to hear what things? We may argue and talk about CHRIST's Godhead, and make fine distinctions about it, and be learned in the Scriptures quite as well, and able to read and understand clever religious books; but such sins do infallibly render us incapable of hearing, seeing, and understanding the things of salvation; and all these are contained in knowing JESUS CHRIST as the SON of GOD. - For "this," says our LORD HIMSELF in His prayer to the FATHER, "this is life eternal, that they may know THEE the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST WHOM THOU hast sent⁴."

⁴ John xvii. 3.

SERMON CCLXXXV.

CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY GHOST: BORN OF THE VIRGIN
MARY.

ISAIAH vii. 14.

“THE LORD HIMSELF shall give you a sign; Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His Name IMMANUEL.”

CHRIST was made in the likeness of men, and partook of our flesh; but yet with a difference: for we are born in sin, HE was born free from all sin in flesh and spirit; we are born of a sinful nature; HE of a pure Virgin, conceived by the HOLY GHOST through the faith of His Virgin Mother. Eve our mother fell from evil desires and from want of faith, and distrust of God's word; the blessed Virgin Mary rose from faith in God's word; and the seed of the woman overcame the serpent¹. CHRIST approached not to any connexion with sin; as the riches of this world are in Scripture called “unrighteous,” HE had none whatever; as all natural desires are connected with evil, CHRIST was born in another way; and thus was “the WORD made flesh, and dwelt among us²,” partaking in no ordinary measure of our sorrows, but in no way approaching to our sins.

“Forasmuch,” says St. Paul, “as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, HE also HIMSELF likewise took part of the same³.” And though in the form of God, and not in any way taking too much to HIMSELF in expressing HIMSELF as equal with God, yet HE made HIMSELF of no reputation, and was made

¹ Gen. iii. 15.

² John i. 14.

³ Heb. ii. 14.

in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, HE humbled HIMSELF⁴ more and more, ever delighting to designate HIMSELF by the Name of the SON of Man, and in infinite lowliness descending to all things that man suffers and is liable to. Thus did HE take upon HIMSELF our sinful flesh,—not sinful to HIM, but sinful to us, inasmuch as we have a law in our members bringing us into captivity to the law of sin ;—and this our flesh HE hath sanctified with His Godhead, that “where sin abounded grace might much more abound⁵ :” that by a new birth of water and the SPIRIT HE might bring children unto GOD ; and by His own Flesh and Blood might impart to our sinful bodies incorruption and everlasting life⁶. For this His Birth set forth in type a mysterious Birth from on high, by which His Church ever since has been formed, so that His seed is as the stars of Heaven. Symbols and signs going before usually are seen in single instances in the earthly Jerusalem ; but their fulfillments in the Christian Church appear in successive multitudes that fill the spiritual Mount Sion.

In the Old Testament there were some intimations that the birth of the MESSIAH would be wonderful, somehow beyond nature ; and that through faith the Heavens should thus “drop down from above, and the skies pour down righteousness.” The three dispensations, indeed, of GOD, which had preceded, appear to have been ushered in by extraordinary births. Thus was the child of promise born to Abraham, when by a singular faith, “he considered not his own body now dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb : he staggered not at the promise of GOD through unbelief ; but was strong in faith, giving glory,” even as the Blessed Virgin herself, “to GOD⁷.” And as the Patriarchal dispensation thus arose, so also was it with that of the Prophets. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, was barren ; when she conceived and bore a son, it was in consequence of her remarkable prayer in faith in the House of GOD ; on account of which the holy Samuel was ever afterwards devoted to the LORD⁸. And now the birth of the Baptist was in like manner beyond nature, when his parents were barren, and stricken in age. Again : the birth of

⁴ Phil. ii. 8.⁵ Rom. v. 20.⁶ John vi. 24.⁷ Rom. iv. 19, 20.⁸ 1 Sam. i.

Isaac was preceded by the conversation of ALMIGHTY GOD with his parents, and that of Samuel by his mother's prayer in the temple and the blessing of the priest, so also was this of John the Baptist accompanied with a vision in the temple, by the altar, and in answer to the prayer of Zacharias⁹. These things might prepare the minds of thoughtful persons to some marvellous birth contrary to nature. As GOD moreover delights to fulfil His promises in things to worldly eyes impossible, so also when worldly appearances are most adverse. So was it with Abraham when Isaac was born: the offering of the LORD and the Priesthood were becoming vile in the sight of men, when Samuel appeared. And the time chosen for the birth of CHRIST was in the same manner remarkable. For the Jewish nation, like Abraham's body, seemed "now dead," and the promises failing under a heathen government; and the royal line of David, to whom the promises were made, was fast fading away from the sight of men, being unnoticed and unknown, "as a root out of a dry ground." Then appeared the true Melchizedec, King of Salem, "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life¹."

The Virgin Mary was at this time living in great poverty in Nazareth, a mean village of despised Galilee²; and, although descended from a family so kingly and sacred, yet in no way benefited by that in worldly respect or condition; when the angel Gabriel appeared to her with that memorable salutation, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured; the LORD is with thee; blessed art thou among women." And afterwards, when the Holy Virgin hastened to her cousin Elisabeth with the joyful tidings, the mother of the Baptist addressed her with the same words, "Blessed art thou among women," and again, "Blessed is she that believed³." On this occasion it was that Mary spoke that memorable hymn, like Miriam of old, the "prophetess and sister of Aaron⁴," when Israel had escaped out of Egypt, and saw their enemies overthrown by an almighty deliverance. And as the circumstances of that miraculous salvation were in so many points figurative, so it may be observed that Miriam is the same

⁹ Luke i. 13.¹ Heb. vii. 3.² John i. 46. vii. 52.³ Luke i. 28. 42. 45.⁴ Exod. xv. 20.

name as Mary; and as the Blessed Mary was both of kingly and of priestly kindred, so Miriam was related both to Moses their chief, and to Aaron their priest; and as Elisabeth the kinswoman of Mary was married to a priest of the line of Aaron, so at that time also was there an Elisabeth or Elisheba as then pronounced⁵, the wife of Aaron the priest. But, notwithstanding this her great dignity in the sight of God, yet the Blessed Virgin still continued in her low estate; for, although God had moved the Roman emperor to that taxing which should mark that CHRIST was born at Bethlehem, the city of David, yet Mary in travelling thither, was so poor, that she could not afford to pay for a place in the inn, which was full of more wealthy guests: but, notwithstanding her condition at that time so needing help, she was obliged to dwell in a mean stable, a sort of cave, it is supposed, or out-house under ground. And when she went to present the Holy Child in the Temple, she could only pay the offering of the turtle-doves⁶, which the poor did when they could not afford the richer offering of a lamb; while she carried thither in her bosom the true LAMB of GOD. And in the temple she was known and welcomed with the Holy Child by none but two humble and obscure persons, Simeon and Anna, who spent their time in devotion unknown to the world. And as the Blessed Virgin appears at our LORD's birth to be subject to much hardship, from the circumstances of her having to travel in such a condition to Bethlehem, and by her hurried and forced flight soon after to Egypt, so also was it probably the case with her throughout. As she approached so near to the Man of Sorrows, she had herself an unusual share of affliction; as is implied in those words of the inspired Simeon, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." And indeed, though this was fulfilled most signally at the Crucifixion, when she stood by the Cross; yet often no doubt before then, as our LORD's life was a life of so much suffering and hardship, the iron must have entered into her soul. Thus no doubt the blessings pronounced on the poor, and on them that mourn, and on them that suffer for righteousness' sake, and the chastening which is the sign of God's love, were especially hers, the "highly-favoured."

⁵ Exod. vi. 23.

⁶ Luke ii. Lev. xii. 8.

We should naturally have wished to know much of the Blessed Mother of our LORD, for our thoughts must revert to her with the most lively interest; we should have wished to have known something of her sayings and actions, so as to have a more full and clear understanding of her character, both in order to love and reverence her, and also as the most engaging example that could be set before us; for we cannot imitate an example of which we know nothing; it would be only following a pattern, however perfect, of our own creation. But of these, her words and deeds, Holy Scripture (for wise reasons no doubt) has told us but little; and early Ecclesiastical history nothing at all. Of course we cannot doubt, as the Catholic Church has always held, that she remained ever a virgin; and, indeed, St. Augustin supposes that such had always been her purpose of heart, while her nominal betrothal to one near of kin was but a veil. It is evident too that she always lived in great poverty; serving God, we may well suppose, in fastings and prayers night and day. Where shall we find more perfect resignation expressed than in those words, "Behold the handmaid of the LORD; be it unto me according to Thy word?" And the Hymn of the Blessed Virgin is a great indication of her humility, in ascribing all things to God; and shows that all her glorying and rejoicing was not in herself, but in God only: her hastening to her kinswoman Elisabeth implies the same lowliness of mind, and an affectionate deference to her kindred. It is more than once mentioned of her, that she pondered things in her heart⁷; which seems to signify that she was of a singularly thoughtful and grave character, like Daniel of old⁸. Alluding to which, St. Ambrose says of her, "Though the Mother of the LORD, she longed to learn the commands of the LORD; though the Mother of God, she desired to know God." She was always retiring into herself, we may suppose, to listen there for the teaching of God, and "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" in all she heard or experienced of His ways.

But if we know not sufficiently respecting her, to make her our particular example and pattern, yet what are to be our thoughts with regard to her? We surely must entertain towards her something of those feelings of love and veneration with which

⁷ Luke i. 29; ii. 19. 51.

⁸ Dan. vii. 28.

we would regard an earthly mother, when those feelings have been exalted and hallowed by death; we must add to this also, the reverence we must hold towards an eminent Saint of God; and, more than all this, we must remember her as the Mother of our LORD and GOD. And this being the case, surely we cannot think too highly of her, unless we give to her the honour which is due to GOD only. But we know too well from the history of mankind, and also from Holy Scripture, that there is always great danger of our putting any created being in the place of GOD, Who, in mercy to our infirmities, is pleased to call HIMSELF "a jealous GOD." Let us look then, first of all, to what Holy Scripture would teach us respecting her.

We know, by a voice from Heaven, that she is "Blessed among women;" that all generations shall call her Blessed: and yet it is very remarkable that even on this subject our LORD seems to turn to us with an awful admonition; for when a certain woman in the crowd "lifted up her voice, and said, Blessed is the womb that bare THEE, and the paps which THOU hast sucked:" HE said, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of GOD and keep it⁹." Now it is very true that the Mother of our LORD had herself heard the Word of GOD and kept it in a remarkable manner, when, in faith, she gave birth to CHRIST; she had, therefore, especially this blessedness also: but our LORD's declaration admits all holy persons to the same blessedness; for, as the holy father St. Augustin observes, she was more blessed by conceiving CHRIST in her heart by faith, than by giving birth to HIM from her womb. But yet our LORD's reply on this occasion turns away our thoughts from what were exclusively the high privileges of His Mother, to those which belong alike to all the children of Adam who love GOD; for she was more blessed in this spiritual relationship, than in the other, so unspeakably great. There is another occasion mentioned by three Evangelists¹, which is remarkable as being similar in its spirit and intention to the last-mentioned incident. While our LORD was talking to the people, "one said unto HIM, Behold, Thy Mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with THEE. But HE answered and

⁹ Luke xi. 27, 28.

¹ Matt. xii. 46; Mark iii. 31; Luke viii. 19.

said unto him that told HIM, Who is My Mother? and who are My brethren? And HE stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My FATHER which is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." We cannot but notice how, on both these occurrences, our LORD seems as it were to take pains to put aside His Blessed Mother from the attention of men, and to press upon them more earnestly the importance of obedience and love to GOD.

Two other occasions may be mentioned as very worthy of attention on this subject, in which there is an account given of our LORD speaking to His Virgin Mother: the one in St. Luke's Gospel, the other in St. John's. The first, when she found our LORD sitting in the temple, when HE was twelve years of age, and said unto HIM, "SON, why hast THOU thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought THEE sorrowing²." But HE immediately corrects, as it were, this mention of His supposed father, to speak of His FATHER in Heaven. "And HE said unto them, How is it that ye sought ME? Wist ye not that I must be about My FATHER's business?" HE points out, not for her instruction only, but has it recorded for ours also, that in His FATHER's business, in the work which the FATHER had given HIM to do, HE was to set aside earthly relationship. The same is set before us in the other instance recorded, where we find that although the first miracle our LORD worked in His public ministration was in compliance with the request of His Mother, at the marriage-feast in Cana of Galilee, yet HE answered her, when she made the request, with these words: "Woman, what have I to do with thee³?" In His kingdom, as the SON of GOD, HE seems first of all to disclaim any interference from human relationship, before HE works that miracle in answer to her faith. The first miracle wrought in the Christian Church was indeed in honour of the Blessed Virgin; yet not because she was our LORD's Mother, but because she was so pre-eminent in faith, so blessed in believing. It was supposed, in the early ages of the Church, that by having these things written in the Inspired Volume, our LORD wished to instruct His Church to

² Luke ii. 48.

³ John ii. 4.

take heed that we do not confound His human Mother with the works of His grace and the miracles of His Spiritual Kingdom. It must, indeed, be very obvious to every one how mysteriously the Blessed Virgin is withdrawn from our sight; and that where she is mentioned there is something said to caution us respecting her. When we are inclined to be over-curious and forward on such a subject, our LORD seems to turn and say to us, "What is that to thee? follow thou ME."

But there is probably no one here present who does at this time require an admonition of this kind; on the contrary, we have had for a long time reasons for being warned lest we show too little honour to her who is "highly favoured" of GOD, and "blessed among women." With how little thought or reverence have persons in this country been used to remember her who is thus mentioned in the Creed of the Holy Catholic Church; of her of whom CHRIST was born into this world, lost otherwise in irremediable sin and sorrow; of her who bore in her arms and at her breast the SON of GOD; who received from HIM a perfect love and obedience such as no child has ever rendered to a parent; with whom, for thirty years of His life, HE continued hidden, as it were, from all the world beside; and whom, in the agonies of death, HE made the object of His tender care? How much is contained in that short description of our LORD's childhood with Joseph and His mother: "HE went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them⁴!" What wonderful condescension! what infinite meekness do these words express! And from hence we may learn how precious in His sight is filial obedience and piety: we must show this perfect meekness and subjection, before we shall be able to perform our higher duties to GOD with acceptance; and to set aside our earthly relations for the service of our FATHER which is in Heaven.

To pass from Holy Scripture to the Church; as the inspired Elisabeth addressed Mary as the Mother of our LORD⁵, we find that in like manner early Christian writers spoke of the Blessed Virgin as "the Mother of GOD," and indeed this title was solemnly given her by a Council of the whole Catholic Church;

⁴ Luke ii. 51.

⁵ Ibid. i. 43.

and the Divines of our own Church have not hesitated to ascribe to her the same, or, I may say, have taken religious pains to do so. But when the universal Church of old declared her to be "the Mother of God," her object was not to exalt the Blessed Virgin, but to protect the right doctrine of our LORD's Incarnation, expressing hereby that HE was both GOD and Man, and "although HE be GOD and Man, yet HE is not two, but one CHRIST." But with regard to those feelings which a good man would wish to entertain towards the Mother of our LORD, and yet to do so without danger or blame, we cannot do better than ever to think and speak of her with that dutiful veneration and piety, without superstition or idolatry, which our own Church teaches. We must observe that our own Church is like all the Churches of the early ages on this subject; it never speaks of her but with titles of honour, as the Holy, the Blessed, the Holy Mother, the Blessed Virgin: it holds two Festivals in the year to her honour; the Feast of the Annunciation, when the Angel Gabriel appeared unto her; and the Feast of the Purification, when after forty days she brought the Holy Child to the Temple. Add to this, daily in the Evening Service we repeat the Magnificat, or "the Song of the Blessed Virgin;" whereby we not only do her honour, and fulfil her own prophecy contained therein, that all generations should call her Blessed; but we imply our hope that we ourselves in the Church may express our devout thanksgiving together with her; may magnify the LORD, and rejoice in GOD our SAVIOUR; not on account of any supposed merit in ourselves, but, on the contrary, because HE has been pleased to look upon our fallen and low estate; that HE that is Mighty hath so magnified us as to take upon HIMSELF our flesh, and to become like one of us, and by His wonderful salvation, thus wrought, hath raised up those that were down, and "filled the hungry with good things." And it must be remembered that when the Blessed Virgin spoke this Hymn, she was walking by faith, not by sight, as we must do, for our LORD was not then born: she was blessed in believing, not in seeing or possessing what GOD had promised; but she, like Abraham of old, forgot all earthly impossibilities, rejoicing by faith in GOD's promises, while as yet "she had no child."

Such must be the temper of those who would have "the HOLY GHOST" to come upon them, "and the power of the HIGHEST to

overshadow" them⁶, that CHRIST may, through faith, be born in their virgin hearts, made pure, and humble, in order to receive HIM. Such is the disposition of lowliness and thanksgiving with which they must welcome His coming; that they may obtain, in some measure, what the Blessed Mother obtained so pre-eminently—the blessing of those who "hear the word of God and keep it;" who are unto CHRIST on that account as brother, and sister, and mother.

On the banks of the Red Sea, when the Israelites had come out of Egypt, Miriam of old sang, as it may well be called, her Magnificat; while others after her took up the same, "and the women went after her," it is said, "with timbrels and dances;" and so may it be more truly fulfilled hereafter, that the Blessed Virgin Mary will take the lead among holy and pure souls of all generations which shall call her blessed, and sing together "the song of Moses and of the LAMB." And of whom among holy women may it be said more truly in the words of the Book of Proverbs, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all?"

"What a procession," exclaims the ancient father St. Ambrose, "will that be! What joy of angels shouting for gladness; that she who has lived a heavenly life on earth is found worthy to dwell in Heaven! Then too Mary will take her timbreland lead the choruses of virgins, singing to the LORD that they have passed through the sea of the world, unshaken by the world's waves." Blessed company! They who would be of that number must begin betimes to learn purity of heart, and submissive lowliness, that they may be like the Mother of our LORD, and that HE Who was born of a Virgin may dwell with them. When Solomon prayed in his glorious temple, he said, "Will GOD in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain THEE⁸." How much more than all that he could conceive, that HE Whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain, should "not abhor the Virgin's womb!" And this sign of His infinite lowliness is to us a pledge and earnest that HE will come also to be born within us. The good Bishop Andrews, in his prayers formed on the Creed, makes this article of our LORD's *conception* the sub-

⁶ Matt. i. 35.

⁷ Prov. xxxi. 29.

⁸ 2 Chron. vi. 18.

ject of our faith ; that of His *birth*, which follows, the subject of our humility. In faith, therefore, and humility, which shone forth so conspicuously in the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us embrace this doctrine of the Creed. And how can we better express these two together, than by the prayer of another saint of God, the holy Bishop Ken, "I believe, O most adorable Humility, that THOU wast at last born into the world⁹; that THOU, having only God for Thy FATHER, and Mary, a pure Virgin, for Thy Mother, whom 'all generations do call Blessed,' both by conception and birth wert perfectly immaculate ; that, being without sin THYSELF, THOU mightest be a fit sacrifice¹ to atone for us sinners, who, being born of unclean parents, were all by nature unclean², and, therefore, all love, all glory, be to THEE, O immaculate LAMB of God, Who takest away the sins of the world³ !"

⁹ Luke ii. 6, 7.

¹ 1 John ii. 1, 2.

² Job xiv. 4.

³ John i. 29.

SERMON CCLXXXVI.

SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED.

LAMENTATIONS i. 12.

“ Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by ? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto ME, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted ME in the day of His fierce anger.”

HE who most of all meditates upon the sufferings of our Blessed SAVIOUR at that season when the Church brings the recital of them most before us¹, is most likely to think of them at all times. If on Good Friday, then also on the Friday in every week ; and if every Friday he thus makes with the Church a Good Friday, then will a serious consideration of CHRIST’S sufferings pass into his whole life, and make a great change in his heart. Nor can any thing be thought of which will tend so much to prepare him for his own time of trial, of suffering, and of death, than this yearly, and then weekly, and at length, in some measure, daily remembrance of the life-giving Cross and Passion.

And it may be observed, that not only has CHRIST suffered for us that HE might, by the propitiation of His Blood, open a way of acceptance for us ; but HE has delivered to us a particular account of those sufferings, no doubt for our contemplation and example. And in the detailed account of these circumstances, there is every kind of variety, every different shape of ill, which man can meet with : there are sufferings of body and of mind ; of

¹ Preached on Good Friday.

shame, and want, and desertion, sorrows both of life and of death ; and, moreover, in every point of view so aggravated that in all the variety of human ills and sufferings, there is none we can meet with, but the same will be found to have been endured and to have been surpassed in the sufferings of the LORD our God for our sakes. So that the Prophet Jeremiah seems to challenge all mankind to produce an instance of suffering equal to that of "the Man of Sorrows," saying, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow."

Many and great were these aggravations, such as are especially dwelt upon in the Psalms and the other Prophets; and such as we read of in the Gospels. Thus, for instance, to take one case of this aggravation: it is evident throughout how our LORD's gracious soul was pained at the circumstance of His being betrayed into the hands of His enemies by one of His own disciples: when HE spoke of it we read that HE was "troubled in spirit²;" and many a time did HE allude to it before HE fully declared it, so that they could understand what it was. Out of the room where they had been at supper together, and where Judas had been received with particular kindness, being allowed to eat out of the same dish with HIM, did the traitor go forth to sell him, for a very paltry price, (about 3*l.* 10*s.* of our money,) and, having the means of betraying HIM, because HE knew, from the confidential intercourse with which he had been received, the secret place where HE went at night to pray. We know how pathetically our LORD laments this circumstance in the Psalms: "It is not an open enemy that hath done ME this dishonour, for then I could have borne it; neither was it Mine adversary that did magnify himself against ME: for then peradventure I would have hid MYSELF from him. But it was even thou, My companion³"

And, again, when CHRIST was beat and mocked by the servants in the house of Caiaphas, what is, humanly speaking, the consolation of mankind under such circumstances of ill-treatment? It is the support and countenance of their nearest friends, of those most dear to them, of whose fidelity and good-will they feel

² John xiii. 21.

³ Ps. lv. 12, 13, 21, 22.

assured; for if they fail in this, it renders the cruelty of enemies very far more bitter and distressing. But now we read, that in the very same room, the hall of the chief priests, when HE met with this ill usage, the first of His own disciples, St. Peter, who had made such professions, was denying HIM, and saying, he did not "know the Man."

And a little while before, when sinking under the greatest weight of agony that the soul of man had ever known, HE turned to His three most favoured disciples, to ask them to watch with HIM. It was His last, His most earnest request. This was, indeed, out of love to them; but even independently of themselves and their own danger, it is a most natural wish with mankind under such trials, and when the evil spirit is near, to have others awake with us. "Then saith HE unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here and watch with ME⁴." But this entreaty HE had to make in vain; for each time that HE returned to them HE found them sleeping. "HE cometh, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with ME one hour?" And soon after, when they awoke, as Scripture says, no doubt with much meaning and emphasis, "they all forsook HIM and fled⁵." This it is which HE speaks of in the Psalms: "Thou hast put away Mine acquaintance far from ME, and made ME to be abhorred of them⁶."

And, indeed, there was this aggravation in the treatment which our Blessed LORD met with throughout: that it was from the hands of those from whom most of all HE might have reasonably expected it should have been otherwise. They were His chosen nation who thus afflicted HIM. HE came unto His own, and His own received HIM not: they even, whom HE had so tenderly watched in the days of old, and on whom HE had shed such benefits from their beginning. It was the High Priest of Israel which HE had loved, that condemned HIM as guilty of death. They were the very people, whose sicknesses HE had carried, and all whose infirmities HE had healed, who cried out, Crucify HIM! This is a circumstance which HE laments throughout the Prophets, and which, no doubt, deeply pierced His tender soul: for it may be observed that His most pathetic lamentations

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 38.

⁵ Ibid. 56.

⁶ Ps. lxxxviii. 7.

throughout are for His own Jerusalem, for its sins and the sorrows that awaited it. "HE beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!"

There is another point of view in which the sorrows of the SON of GOD for our sakes exceed infinitely the sufferings of all mankind. Many persons, such as martyrs and others, have been put to death by severe and lingering torments, but have been supported throughout by high and excited spirits under their bodily pains; sometimes from the admiration of others, or mere hardihood; sometimes from the joy of the HOLY SPIRIT, and in their being made thereby like unto CHRIST, and rejoicing to suffer shame for His name's sake. Not so was it with our LORD, for His spirit sank within HIM; never was greater anguish of mind than that which was then laid on His innocent soul. What that agony was, and what was that bitter cup which HE prayed might, if possible, be put away from HIM⁸, no heart of man can conceive: but the outward signs of it are such as we can, in some measure, judge of: His falling with His face on the ground, His strong crying and tears, His sweating great drops of blood, these are proofs of sorrow of mind which have never been equalled among mankind. The light of GOD's countenance is such that it may make all sufferings of body and mind very tolerable; but this was withdrawn from our LORD, and that too, even most of all, in the hour of His extreme need, when His bodily sufferings might be supposed to have been the greatest: for then, upon the cross, HE cried out, "My GOD, My GOD, why hast THOU forsaken ME?" If the light of GOD's countenance is of all things the most supporting and comforting, to be deprived of this is the anguish which is most unsupportable.

There is another circumstance which may well have rendered the sufferings of CHRIST far beyond those of all His creatures. When we read of a great and good man being ill-used, as, for instance, of a king being put to death by his subjects, being dragged insolently through the streets by a fierce rabble, and treated with shame and cruelty, our feelings are much more moved by this than if it is only a common person like one of our-

⁷ Luke xix. 42.

⁸ Matt. xxvi. 39.

⁹ Ibid. xxvii. 46.

selves who is thus treated. For the greater the person is who is reduced to this, the greater is the indignity and suffering. But what are these differences among mankind, from the highest to the lowest, compared with the difference between us and **ALMIGHTY GOD**? Consider then how infinitely worse than all that men can suffer, was every wanton blow that was given to **HIM**, the scourge that was applied to His back—every thorn that pierced His temples!—our **GOD HIMSELF** upon earth; **HE** by whose word the Heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

And again, independently of these many sorrows of mind, which were more in number than can be told, the bodily sufferings of themselves, which were inflicted on **HIM**, were very great; some of these were besides, and over and above the Crucifixion. Thus, before **HE** was given up to be crucified, **HE** was bound at the house of Annas¹, and sent to Caiaphas, no doubt with much roughness and ill-usage; and at that place, throughout the night, the servants of Caiaphas were striking and beating **HIM** in mockery². After this, as soon as it is light in the morning, **HE** is bound by them again, we are told, and no doubt more severely, and sent to Pilate³; dragged through the streets by His rejoicing and wicked enemies, both men and devils instigating them on; dragged, as it has been supposed, with a halter around His neck. After this he is sent from Pilate to Herod⁴, to stand before the man who put the Baptist to death; and here again we read that **HE** is mocked and set at nought by Herod and his men of war, instigated by the wicked Pharisees; and then hurried through the streets back again to Pilate, meeting, no doubt, in the way, with such treatment as might be expected from those who were thirsting for His blood. In the next place, when Pilate wished to release **HIM**, this very desire of Pilate's only adds to His sufferings; for taking the opportunity of the festival, he affords the people a power of asking His life, giving them the choice of two; and in order that there might be doubt which of the two might be chosen, he puts with **HIM** the most despicable ruffian whom he could find in the jails, Barabbas, a murderer, a robber, an insurrectionist; but they chose even this man; as if they thought this

¹ John xviii. 24.

² Matt. xxvi. 67.

³ Matt. xxvii. 2.

⁴ Luke xxiii. 7.

the best alternative of the two, and cry out against CHRIST, Crucify HIM ! Thus was our LORD's case rendered worse, even by the efforts of Pontius Pilate to save His life. Bad was it to be condemned by the hypocritical Pharisees, and by the heathen Governor, but far worse for His own people to be desirous of His death, so as even to prefer Barabbas before HIM.

And now, Pilate being very unwilling to crucify HIM, devised another plan ; he thought he would " chastise HIM and release HIM " : this he thought he would do so severely as to move them to pity, even cruel and unrelenting as they were. And, therefore, he ordered HIM to be scourged : this was of itself a very cruel punishment. For this purpose they called together the whole band of the soldiers, in order to make it as public as possible, as such punishments are ; they stripped HIM, and tied HIM, as it is supposed, naked to a pillar and scourged HIM. Nor was this all ; for as they thought it very absurd in the Jews, whom they despised, that a man so apparently miserable and poor should be charged of wishing to make HIMSELF a King : they platted a crown of the long thorns that grow in that country, in order both to make HIM appear an object of ridicule, and also to run the thorns into His head ; and then, we are told, they beat HIM on the head, no doubt, to drive in the thorns and give HIM pain⁵. Add to this, they procured a piece of red cloth, perhaps the old cloak of a soldier, and put it on HIM in mockery of the purple robe which kings used to wear ; and putting this on and off His naked body was adding, it is thought, to His pains ; for HE was now covered with the wounds of His scourging, which were thus made to bleed afresh.

Pilate thought that this now was quite enough to satisfy the Jews without crucifying HIM ; for, somehow, he had an unaccountable dread of putting HIM to death, although he thus cruelly used HIM ; and, therefore, he brought HIM forth, this most pitiable spectacle which he had now rendered HIM, with the thorns in His temples, and His face and body covered with blood, and says to the Jews, " Behold the Man," as if he had said, Look here, at the Man you have brought me ; there will be no great fear of such a one as this making HIMSELF a King ; here is an

⁵ Luke xxiii. 16.

⁶ John xix. 1. 6.

object of misery and degradation such as your eyes have never before seen : surely you will be satisfied with this. But they cried out, " Away with HIM, away with HIM ! crucify HIM ! "

It was not till after all this, when they had persisted in requiring Pilate to grant their request, and alarming him with threatening to appeal to Cæsar⁷, that the pains of the Crucifixion commenced.

In those days the Romans were not content with putting criminals to death, especially if they were slaves, but endeavoured, with all the ingenuity that they could, to find ways to make death as tedious and painful as possible ; and for this purpose they invented crucifixion, which was thought the most painful of all deaths : sometimes, indeed, they impaled the sufferer on a stake of wood through his body ; but by driving the nails through the hands they found they could inflict greater pain than in any other way ; and besides which, as it did not affect any vital part, it did not shorten life so speedily as other pains ; (for persons were known to continue alive on the cross for whole days and nights ;) and then, by letting the whole weight of the body to rest upon the nails in these wounds, it kept up the most excruciating pain they could invent until death. It was also attended with this circumstance, that their naked body was thus exposed to view, and their enemies might watch and see them die, by little and little, adding thereby to their miseries.

It was the same ingenuity in torture that led them to invent another circumstance often alluded to, that the poor criminal had to carry his cross to the place of execution, both as a piece of shame and mockery, and to bring more near to his mind the prospect of his sufferings.

It appears to have been at nine o'clock in the morning when they thus drove the nails through His hands ; at which time, and while they were in the act of so doing, it is supposed our LORD made that prayer, " FATHER, forgive them, for they know not what they do⁸." It was from twelve till three o'clock in the day that the sun was darkened, and at three o'clock that our LORD cried out, " My God, My God, why hast THOU forsaken ME ? " And between three and six o'clock, at the time when the Paschal

⁷ John xix. 13.

⁸ Luke xxiii. 34.

LAMB was sacrificed, HE cried, "I thirst⁹," and drank of the vinegar, and said, "It is finished." We read before, that they offered HIM vinegar, and HE would not drink¹; and we read of the soldiers coming in mockery and offering HIM vinegar². For persons who are dying of this torturing death are said to suffer much from excruciating thirst; the soldiers, therefore, by holding the vinegar to HIM, meant to mock these His pains; and HE, by refusing to drink, intended to signify that HE was willing to suffer all they inflicted without any relief; but at last, when it was finished, HE consented to drink; showing that, though HE would not to relieve HIMSELF, yet for their sakes HE was willing to receive any kindness they offered HIM. And at last, with a loud voice, HE gave up the ghost; showing thereby, by His loud voice, that HE laid down His life willingly; "No man taketh it from ME," as HE said before; "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again³." And the Centurion, or Roman captain, who had no doubt been used to sights of death, knew that no man when dying would cry out with a loud voice, for at death their voice becomes very faint and feeble; he therefore noticed this more than the darkness and the earthquake, and all that had been going on; and when he heard that HE thus cried out and gave up the ghost, he exclaimed, "Truly this Man was the SON of GOD⁴."

Now, the Prophet Jeremiah, in speaking of these sorrows as being not like unto any other sorrows, says, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" implying that to all of us who witness His sorrows, it is, indeed, of very great concern to ourselves. Is it nothing to you? in other words, Is it not very much indeed to you? is it not indeed all in all to you? every part of them most intimately concerns yourselves; all ye that pass by; ye that cannot but see and know of them, although ye are passing by as taken up in your own concerns.

Now there are three occasions in which our LORD addresses those who witness His sorrows, from which we may learn in what way HE would wish us to consider them, and approach HIM in His sufferings. The first is that, to the disciples, to whom HE went three

⁹ John xix. 34.¹ Matt. xxvii. 34.² Luke xxiii. 36.³ John x. 18.⁴ Mark xv. 39.

times exhorting them not to leave HIM to suffer and pray alone, but to watch with HIM, and to pray for themselves, that they enter not into temptation. In witnessing, therefore, CHRIST's sorrows, we must watch and pray with HIM, as persons in great danger, and who are intimately concerned in those sorrows.

The next instance is that of the women who bewailed and lamented HIM, to whom HE turned and said, Weep not for ME, but for yourselves; for if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry⁵? *i. e.* if one perfectly innocent and free from sin can thus suffer under the wrath of God, what must be the punishment of the guilty, the dry and withered branches which have been found unfruitful, when the judgment of God shall overtake them? If JESUS CHRIST, the true and living Vine, could thus suffer when HE stood in the place of sinners, if God laid all this on the only SON of His dear love, what must sin be in His sight, and what must be its punishment! Let us always consider CHRIST's sufferings; but let us never venture to consider them without this humiliation of ourselves.

Lastly, a right and profitable consideration of CHRIST's sufferings may be found in that penitent thief, who is the most remarkable instance of faith on record, and was so accepted of CHRIST; and the words of this penitent thief may give us a description of the state of his heart which was so approved: he rebuked his fellow sufferer, who was blaspheming, and said, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto JESUS, LORD, remember me when THOU comest into Thy Kingdom⁶."

Feeling that we are under the same condemnation of death, which is passed on all mankind, let us humble ourselves before HIM as they who receive the due rewards of their deeds, looking unto CHRIST, Who hath done nothing amiss, with humble faith and hope, and praying that, unworthy as we are, we may not be forgotten by HIM when HE comes in His kingdom.

⁵ Luke xxiii. 31.

⁶ Ibid, xxiii. 42.

SERMON CCLXXXVII.

DEAD AND BURIED.

JOHN xix. 40, 41.

“Then took they the body of JESUS, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where HE was crucified there was a garden ; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.”

ALTHOUGH our Blessed SAVIOUR throughout His life suffered every privation that human nature could undergo ; for HE literally had not where to lay His head ; having nothing to call His own but the poor and mean garments which HE wore, and even those taken from HIM and divided among the soldiers before His death ; so that HE died in utter nakedness, as well as shame and suffering. Yet as soon as HE is dead, the case seems different ; HE is buried by two rich and honourable men, Joseph of Arimathea, a counsellor of distinction, and Nicodemus, one of the great council of the Jewish nation ; and with every mark of respect which rich men could give : Nicodemus brings spices and linen clothes to wrap His Body, and Joseph lays it in his own new tomb, hewn out as a little chamber in a rock, in a garden. And thus did they fulfil the saying of the Prophet Isaiah, who, after all the description of His humiliation and sufferings, says, that HE should be “with the rich in His death¹.”

Now there is nothing written respecting our LORD but what is of great consequence to us, and we cannot but suppose that by this HE intended to teach us some Divine and heavenly lesson.

¹ Isaiah liii. 9.

Although infidels and bad men, of every age, say that it matters not what becomes of the mortal remains after death, whether they are decently buried in a churchyard, and by the Church which took us up into her arms at Baptism; or whether they are cast out, or given up in any rude or dishonourable way; yet our compassionate SAVIOUR would thus seem to teach us that those feelings which HE has implanted in our nature, feelings of respect for the dead, and for all things which appertain to them, are sacred feelings, not to be rudely and coarsely cast aside, but to be cherished by us, to be treated with all reverence and delicacy, as connected with some great things which we know not of.

Whatever, I say, is written respecting the life and death of CHRIST is of great importance; and moreover we shall generally find the same in some shape or other throughout the whole of the Scriptures: thus it is with this subject. As GOD was pleased to show that singular care and honour for the dead Body of our LORD, which HE did not receive during His life, so we shall find incidents and expressions in all Scripture, which would teach us that the sacred respect which we have for the remains of the dead is not displeasing to ALMIGHTY GOD; for not only do we find that all nations of the world have been careful in religious observances respecting the burial of the dead, but Scripture itself takes up and sanctions the same feelings. Thus although the patriarch Abraham was but as a stranger in the land of promise, so that he had "not so much as to set his foot on" that he could call his own, yet one place he had there which he bought "for a possession," of the children of Heth, and the buying of it is mentioned at length; it was the cave of Machpelah for a burying-place. And it is mentioned particularly, "The field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying-place²." Surely this also is written for our learning.

And the patriarch Jacob at his death in Egypt, we find, gave strict commands respecting his burial in that sacred land of Canaan, which he had left. We read that his body was embalmed,

² Genesis xxiii. 17. 20.

and was carried up with a very great procession of the children of Israel and of the Egyptians, and buried with much lamentation and funeral rite in this cave of Machpelah in the land of Canaan³. And of the patriarch Joseph also St. Paul mentions, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as a great proof of his faith, that at his dying, he “gave commandment respecting his bones⁴,” that they also should be carried and laid in that holy land, their promised inheritance.

In later times, when the children of Israel were established in their own country, we find that one of the strongest denunciations which God made to the disobedient Prophet was this, “Thou shalt not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.” And by that Prophet the greatest curse that God pronounced on the wicked altar which Jeroboam had raised out of his own head was this, “Men’s bones shall be burnt upon thee.” And when Josiah, in fulfilment of this prophecy, took the bones out of the sepulchres, and polluted with them the idolatrous altar, “he saw the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah; and he said, Let him alone, let no man move his bones⁵.”

And the greatest honour pronounced on good kings was, that they should be buried in the sepulchre of their fathers. As for instance of Jehoiada, we read, “They buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house.” And of Joash, who fell away to idolatry, “They buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings⁶.” And of Jeroboam, and of the wicked Ahab and Jezebel, the strongest and most terrible curse which God pronounced, and the faithful fulfilment of which curse is so particularly recorded, was this: “The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the walls of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat⁷.”

Whereas the kindness and the piety of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah is particularly mentioned, that when the seven sons of Saul were hanged, she “took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon

³ Gen. 1. 7. 13.

⁴ Heb. xi. 22.

⁵ 2 Kings xxiii. 16, 18.

⁶ 2 Chron. xxiv. 16. 25.

⁷ 1 Kings xxi. 23, 24.

them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night. And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah had done⁸." And immediately we read of king David, as if he was reminded by the good deed of something that he had himself left undone, that he "went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son, and buried them in the sepulchre of Kish his father." Many are the things of this kind which are mentioned in Holy Scripture.

There is another circumstance respecting our Lord's burial, worthy of our especial attention: it is said, "they wound His body in the linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury." Now it was not the custom of all nations to bury in the ground at all; for some, as the Romans, used to burn the bodies of the dead; but the Jews not only buried their dead, but buried them with embalming and sweet spices. This might appear to some a very poor thing to do, to be embalming with sweet spices, as if they thought they could preserve sweet and fresh the dead carcase which in a few days is to become a mass of loathsome corruption. So it might seem to an unbeliever; but the fact is, that these customs had been so ordained among the Jews, in order to express by this significant action their faith in the resurrection of the body: for what could set forth this more than embalming and sweet spices? Thus did the sacred nation show that even in death "they sorrowed not as others who had no hope." And not only do we read much of this embalming at our LORD's funeral, as in Nicodemus bringing the sweet spices, and in the accounts which are given of those holy women which followed HIM, and were disappointed in not being able to perform their last office to His dead Body, but there is an incident mentioned of our LORD HIMSELF, in which HE spoke in a remarkable and affecting manner of this embalming. For six days before His death, when the good Mary, the sister of Martha, poured the ointment on His head as HE sat at meat, and Judas complained of it, our LORD defended her, and said, "She hath wrought a good work on ME, she hath come beforehand to anoint

⁸ 2 Sam. xxi. 10—13.

My Body for the burial :” as if knowing that this holy woman would be disappointed in embalming His Body at the burial, HE took this occasion of comforting her beforehand, saying that HE accepted it as thus done for His funeral,—done as it were to His living Body that should never die.

Thus as Israel was embalmed of old in Egypt, so the Body of our Saviour was embalmed for the grave : but that which was signified by embalming was itself fulfilled in Christ ; for embalming was meant to signify that the body would be preserved from decay by ALMIGHTY GOD, though hidden from our eyes and buried in the earth : and this was fulfilled in CHRIST’S dead Body, for it “saw no corruption.” But thus would our LORD throughout the Old Testament, and by what happened to HIMSELF in the New, teach us respect for the dead, for those bodies which among Christians have been the temples of the HOLY GHOST, and which are to be restored and to rise again not liable to corruption.

But now those things which in the Jewish Church served for outward signs and figures are kept up in the Christian Church, not only by outward signs, but by a rational and spiritual worship. We also show the same reverence and respect for the mortal remains, which GOD has thus intimated to be well-pleasing to HIM.

As the Patriarchs of old were so earnestly desirous and took such pains that they should be gathered to their fathers in that holy land of Canaan, so would we desire that our earthly remains, and those of our friends, should be deposited in those holy places which are set apart by the Church of GOD, which are consecrated by the Bishop. As the pious Israelites of old, from generation to generation, so would we wish to rest in those sacred places in which our forefathers have been laid,—with all religious care, such as they have handed down to us from the beginning :—turned to the East, as looking for CHRIST’S coming, and dying in faith ;—around those Houses of GOD, in which HE has set His Name, where they that survive shall worship HIM, and they that have gone have worshipped HIM from age to age. All that we need or can keep on earth is this our burying-place, and therefore Abraham lived as a stranger and pilgrim, having no spot in the land of Canaan which he could call his own, but that which he had purchased for

his burial-place. And CHRIST afterwards in the holy land had one spot which was bought by the price of His innocent Blood; it was the Potter's field, to bury strangers in; *i. e.* that for Christians—for such as are strangers and pilgrims upon earth—CHRIST has bought on earth one piece of land to be theirs by His Blood, that in which they may be buried. Such are our churchyards to us.

The kings of the Israelites of old were desirous to be buried “in the city of David,” in “the sepulchres of their fathers.” Our city of David is the Church, the holy Jerusalem, the true Mount Sion; and the sepulchres of our fathers are those holy churchyards, such as the Church has hallowed, as it did for our forefathers of old.

And as GOD was pleased on many occasions to show His acceptance of their pious regard, with respect to their mortal remains; and, indeed, as it was HE HIMSELF who taught it them, and laid it as the heaviest judgment on those who denied HIM and gave themselves up to idolatry, that they should not come into the sepulchres of their fathers: so, no doubt, does HE look with favour and approbation on this religious care of ours; which nature, indeed, itself teaches us, which the Church sanctions, and which Holy Scripture approves of, and hallows to more excellent mysteries.

We do not, indeed, embalm the bodies of the dead, as the Jews did, and as our SAVIOUR'S Body was embalmed, but we commit them to the grave with that spiritual embalming, if I may so speak, and that incense which is so well-pleasing to GOD,—the prayers of the Saints,—the prayers of the Church,—the Burial Service, expressing faith in CHRIST, and a “sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.”

Here, as in the arms of the Church, our true and spiritual mother, we leave them: here, as in the land of Canaan, we deposit them, and thereby express our full assurance of that heavenly Canaan which our bodies and souls are heirs to in heaven.

We do not wonder, therefore, that our ancient Catholic Church has been so “jealous with a godly jealousy,” and careful with respect to her churchyards, not only by having them set apart and consecrated by the chief Pastor, whom GOD has appointed;

but it may be observed in the rubric, or directions given at the beginning of the Burial Service, that she has been very careful that these prayers of the Church should be read only over those who may be rightly considered her own children,—for whom she may rightly express a charitable hope that they are with God.

For it is therein declared, and the order is given to the minister, who is bound by his oath to obey it, that this office is “not to be used for any that die unbaptized or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves.” Now, by this term “excommunicate” the Church intends that a great many should not be buried by her in her churchyards, who now are buried there by her ministers; for the term “excommunicate” signifies persons cut off from the Holy Communion; and the Church intends that all persons guilty of notorious crimes should be “excommunicate” until they repent. And therefore there are many persons now buried by the clergy in her churchyards, who would not be, if the intentions of the Church were fulfilled. And therefore many complain, and not without reason, that the Church in her prayers over the dead expresses a hope, when it may be that the person buried may have been a very wicked man, and lived and died without repentance, with no hope, and without God in the world.

And it cannot be doubted that many, many thousand souls would have been saved, who now are lost, if these rules of the Church were fulfilled. For if notorious sinners were cut off from the Church, or excommunicate, during their lives, and not buried by her at her death, many would be moved by these solemn considerations, would repent and be saved, who now die without repentance; many others would be afraid to offend: and the Church herself would have her bosom cleared from those who now defile her, so as to approach God with pure hands, and have her prayers heard.

It cannot be doubted, I say, by any person of any party, that it would tend very much to the salvation of the souls of us all, if the Church were thus purified, and her discipline restored; if she was made what CHRIST intended her to be, and what the early Church was.

It is a great mistake to suppose that the Church is merely the

concern of the clergy, and not of the people; as if the clergy made up the Church: both are equally concerned in her welfare; both are alike the Church; both together must labour and pray for her, that she may be restored: no good can be done, unless both join together hand in hand; with united prayers and united endeavours for her.

All is for the sake of what is called the laity, *i. e.* the body of Christians at large. The clergy are for their sakes; for their sakes they are sent, and ordained, and appointed of God from the beginning to this present time. For the sake of the laity it is so desirable that the discipline of the Church should be restored; that decayed branches should be cut off from the living Vine; that notorious sinners and unbelievers should be set apart from the family of the faithful, both in life and in death.

There is no greater scandal to the Church than this her want of discipline; there is no greater offence or cause of falling in the world. Heathen are not converted, because they say very many Christians are no better than themselves. Those who never receive the Holy Communion commonly say that the reason of this is, that they see those who do communicate are not better than others.

Many will rise up in the Judgment, and say that they lived and died unbelievers, and in open sin, yet the Church, on account of her great want of discipline, never told them of their lost condition in the sight of God: the Church was open to them all alike, and the holy Table was accessible to them all alike; and the Church buried them at last in holy ground, as if they were still in her bosom; whereas, if they had been warned by seeing such persons excluded from the Church, they would have seen their lost condition, and repented.

No Christian can say that he is not to be concerned for his brother's eternal welfare; and, indeed, no man can fall alone; no man can go to heaven alone. We must all agree and combine together to make the Church what it should be.

There is no place on earth which we ought to look on with solemn thoughts, so much as a churchyard: it is like a spot between the two worlds; for they whose bodies are there, are already in another world; all the differences and distinctions of riches and station are there at end. And the most tender and best feelings which

the living can entertain are all connected with a churchyard: there their parents, their brothers and sisters, their wives, it may be, and children, all that is dear in this world, are gathered; and there we ourselves are soon to lie down, waiting for the eternal Judgment.

It is so natural to us to have respect for a churchyard, and to all that belongs to it, and the paths that lead to it, that we have reason to be very thankful to Almighty God, that HE has been pleased to sanction and bless these feelings, out of compassion to us, to our frail condition, and the many heart-moving, heart-breaking thoughts we have with respect to the place and burying of the dead.

That throughout the Old Testament, by many circumstances and expressions, and throughout the New, by the example of our Blessed LORD, and ever since, by the care of His Church, HE has allowed and sanctified these our sorrows, teaching us to do honour to our bodies, during life, as the temples of the HOLY GHOST; and permitting us to do so even to the perishable remains of each other.

May HE therefore grant, of His great mercy, that neither by our own wilful fault or neglect, nor by the wiles of the devil, we may be separated from the family of the faithful, the Church of God, here on earth; and that our souls also may find rest in that Paradise where the penitent thief has been received, until that great Day when the earth and "the sea," and "death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them;" and they shall be "judged every man according to their works⁹."

⁹ Rev. xx. 13.

SERMON CCLXXXVIII.

HE DESCENDED INTO HELL.

PSALM xvi. 9, 10.

“ My flesh also shall rest in hope : For THOU wilt not leave My soul in hell ; neither wilt THOU suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.”

OUR Blessed LORD, being not only very GOD, but also very MAN, had not only a human Body, but likewise a human Soul : and therefore at His death HE not only laid His Body beside His brethren of mankind, in the grave, but His Soul also departed from the Body. And this, indeed, was signified in His dying words, “ FATHER, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit ; and having said thus, HE gave up the ghost :” he delivered up His human Soul apart from the Body. And in this place the Psalmist alludes to both, (as St. Peter explains it,) for when HE speaks of His Body, that His flesh did not see corruption ; HE mentions together with it His Soul also, that His Soul was not left in hell¹.

But it is not at all clear what is meant by this expression, of His descending “ into hell :” some have supposed that it signifies the place of evil spirits and eternal woe ; there to vanquish all the spirits of darkness ; “ spoiling principalities and powers, HE made a show of them openly².” But another opinion is, that it does not at all signify the place of torment, but only the place of departed souls : for the word which we here translate hell, in the original language signifies nothing more than that unseen world, into which the spirits of the dead are received, when

¹ Psalm xvi. 10. Acts ii. 31.

² Col. ii. 15.

released from the body. Therefore the words of the Psalmist might signify, that neither did His holy Body corrupt in the grave, nor was His Soul left apart from it, but restored again to His Body. To this descent of our LORD St. Paul alludes, when he says, "Now that HE ascended, what is it but that HE also descended first into the lower parts of the earth³?"

And some suppose that there was a great object in the salvation of mankind, which our LORD wrought in thus going down to hell, or the place of the departed; that He there preached to the dead: and they understand St. Peter to allude to this when he says, "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also HE went and preached unto the spirits in prison."

However this may be, from this great and important doctrine we may learn that our LORD was indeed very MAN; that as His life was in all respects like our own, compassed with human sorrows and infirmities; so also was His death like ours, a separation of the soul from the body. And we may conclude, that both in His righteous Soul and in His Body HE bore our sins: and as in life HE took upon HIMSELF every shape of suffering and sorrow and infirmity, in order to hallow and bless the same to His faithful followers after HIM; so, no doubt, was His Soul's departing into hell for our sakes, to carry even there also an atonement for us, to carry with HIM some inconceivable blessing and benefit for us into that place also. As HE said of His going up to heaven, that it was to prepare a place for us in His FATHER'S house⁴; so also when HE went into the world of departed spirits we may suppose it was to prepare a place for us. So that what the Psalmist said long before might in some high and especial sense be fulfilled in the Christian: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for THOU art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me⁵."

To all this did our Blessed LORD submit for our sakes, as also HE speaks of HIMSELF in the Psalms: "I am counted as one of them that go down into the pit: . . . Free among the dead, like unto them that are wounded and lie in the grave; who are out

³ Eph. iv. 9.

⁴ John xiv. 2.

⁵ Psalm xxiii. 4.

of remembrance and are cut away from Thy hand. THOU hast laid me in the lowest pit, in a place of darkness and in the deep⁶."

And as every thing that our LORD underwent for our sakes appears to have been set forth and typified beforehand in the Law, so also was this His descent into hell. For we read, that on the great day of the Atonement the priest was to bring two goats to the door of the tabernacle; and one was to be offered unto the LORD as a sin-offering; which signified the dead Body of our LORD on the Cross. But the other, which was called the scape-goat, was to be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement, and then to escape into the wilderness. "When he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place," it is said, "he shall bring the live goat: and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness⁷."

Here, as it is said, "after he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place," so after our LORD upon the Cross had said "It is finished," HE left His Body dead upon the Cross; and His Soul departed, bearing our sins.

Now, the departure of the soul from the body into that unknown land of spirits, is of itself so awful in thought, even to the good man, that this article of the Creed may be a point of great consolation to him. Thus it was of this place that our LORD spake to the dying thief on the Cross, when HE said, "This day shalt thou be with ME in paradise;" implying, that immediately at his death the soul of the dying man should go into a happy place, which was worthy of the name of Paradise, and that His soul should be there with CHRIST; thou shalt be there "with ME." And ever since that time the souls of Christians who die in the LORD are said "to be with CHRIST," "to sleep in the LORD;"—a state far happier than any thing in this world, "to depart, and to be with CHRIST," as St. Paul describes it, "which is far better;" that "to be absent from the body, is to be present with the LORD⁸." And it is called "sleep" because it is a rest from

⁶ Psalm lxxxviii. 4—6.

⁷ Levit. xvi. 20, 21.

⁸ 2 Cor. v. 8.

care. "I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the LORD from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them⁹." And all this is expressed in our own Prayer-book, in the Burial Service, that for a Christian to die, even before the day of judgment, is to be with CHRIST, and to be released from life as from a burden, and to be in joy; and is an occasion of thankfulness for those that remain, that he is gone into a place far better than this life.

"ALMIGHTY GOD, with whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the LORD, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity; we give THEE hearty thanks, for that it hath pleased THEE to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world." But because this their happy state is not the fulness and perfection of bliss, we pray at the same time for them and for ourselves, that GOD will "hasten His kingdom," and "shortly accomplish the number of His elect."

And if we learn all this respecting the state of good men between the time of their death and the day of judgment, so also does Scripture reveal unto us something respecting the condition of bad men at their death. "This night thy soul shall be required of thee¹," said our LORD, of the worldly rich man; not at the day of judgment only, but even in this night. And where his soul would be found immediately at his death has been described to us in that awful parable of the other rich man; for no sooner do we read that "he died, and was buried," but the next words are, "and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." His condition is described to us as something more dreadful than any thing we can endure in this life, as burning in a fire, and as unable to procure the very least comfort which this life will always supply to the miserable, when he prayed to Abraham that he would "send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool" his "tongue." He is represented, also, as seeing, though afar off, the spirits which are happy. And he is likewise described as being very anxious for those he has left in this world, that they might be saved from that dreadful place².

⁹ Rev. xiv. 13.

¹ Luke xii. 20.

² Ibid. xvi. 19—31.

Now, we may observe that it is the great day of judgment which the Holy Bible is ever setting before us, and heaven and hell : while it says very little of death, as a matter of importance in itself, excepting that it closes our account, and, as it were, shuts the door, telling us that where the tree falleth, there it shall lie,—that there is no repentance and no work in the grave, whither we are going,—no more to be done, no change to be made on our part by any efforts or wishes of our own. But although, I say, the Sacred Scriptures teach us to think nothing of temporal death, but merely as a sleep, while it would beyond all things impress on our minds a sense of the day of judgment, and that which is to follow it; yet the little that is told us of the state of our souls before the day of the judgment, and immediately when they depart from the body, is of itself very deeply affecting, awful, and concerning. And the more so because, somehow or other, notwithstanding all that Holy Scripture says of the nearness and rapid approach of that great Day of account, yet men are ever apt to look on it as afar off: but that state into which we go immediately, when we depart from the body, is so near, that it naturally must be a subject of deep concern to us; it is like the piece of land which lies nearest to our door; it is as the churchyard, into which we step out of the church; the wall between us and that state is so slight, we may be at any moment on the other side of it, to-day, or to-morrow, or next year, for a certainty in a few years: some of us are constantly changing our place; and among our friends, after we have lived for a few years, there are as many of them in the state of the departed as there are with us on earth. What, therefore, do we know of those places which lie so near us, but beyond our sight? We know “The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them³,” “neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand,” saith the LORD⁴. They live unto God⁵: they are in the place where the Soul of CHRIST has been; they are with CHRIST, in comparison with which to be in the body is to be absent from the LORD⁶; they are carried by angels to be with Abraham⁷; they are blessed beyond all earthly blessedness. They may say with the Psalmist,

³ Wisdom iii. 1.⁴ John x. 28.⁵ Gal. ii. 19.⁶ 2 Cor. v. 8.⁷ Luke xvi. 22.

“Our soul is escaped even as a bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare is broken, and we are delivered⁸.” They have escaped the danger, they are safe; in one word, “they are in peace⁹.”

And the unfaithful and disobedient also,—they are immediately in a place from whence they cannot get forth; and a place of woe far more miserable than any suffering in this world.

It will be highly profitable to us to dwell upon the thoughts of these two, what are called intermediate, states; our condition between death and judgment,—the states, in one of which our friends are now, which have left us, and in one of which we soon must join them.

When work is done, then is the time for contemplation and reflection; and then, when our labours are all over, and we are waiting for our Judge to pronounce sentence upon them, we shall, no doubt, form a far more correct judgment of them, than now we do. Although we shall have left every thing earthly behind, yet our works will be with us; “their works do follow them¹,” says Holy Scripture. And we may well suppose, that of all the thoughts that will then occur to us in looking back upon our past time of trial, none will be more wonderful and affecting than this: that once from day to day, we might have made any change in our lives, but then we cannot; every day that we recall to memory, we shall think, I might have done better if I had pleased, I might have served God better, I might have taken HIM at His word, when HE warned me so much of the consequences of sin, of the dangers of worldly cares and pleasures and riches, but now I cannot. The money I spent on myself, I might have spent on others, and done something for God’s honour; the money I left behind me, I might have now had with me in the hope of heavenly treasures; and so I should have done, if I did what I very often intended to do; but I put it off and died without doing it. Death overtook me when I thought not of it, and put a stop to barren intentions. But so should I have done if I had only believed the words of God, which I so constantly heard. A cup of cold water given for His sake, said our Blessed LORD, should not lose its reward; and yet how often

⁸ Psalm cxxiv. 7.

⁹ Wisdom iii. 3.

¹ Rev. xiv. 13.

might I have done it when I neglected to do so? But of the forgiveness of injuries especially our Lord's warning is, that we take heed lest that door close upon us, before that necessary work is done. "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing²." It is to be done quickly while we are in the way, lest, ere we are aware of it, we find ourselves in that prison where there is no repentance. Then shall we judge very differently of all matters, because the temptations we are now under to commit sin, will then be over. We may know something of the sort of feeling we then may have; for instance, when we find a person is dead whom we have neglected, to whom we have done any wrong, however slight, or with whom we have had any disagreement; how bitter is the thought, when he is gone and it cannot be repaired, when our own feelings also are restored to what they always ought to have been, are turned into pity and compassion, instead of opposition and indifference to his desires? There is scarce a thought in the world more insupportable than this, and the reason is, because the feelings of temptation which we were under have ceased, and because it is irrecoverable. How much more will this be the case, when we are removed from all the temptations of this world altogether? So also with regard to other sins; as of lust, for instance: there are times even in this world, when a man's heart will sink within him in loathing and abhorrence of those sins which he may have been guilty of in this kind; how much more when his soul is freed from the body, and such allurements and temptations are for ever at an end? On a sick bed, in the dead stillness of night, in solitude and desertion, thoughts of past sin will come upon the mind with a sense of pain, which it may never have felt before; and of a nature different and more sad and intolerable than any other pain; and the reason of this is, because those objects are removed which occupied the attention before, and the conscience is left to turn upon itself: the eye of God in the soul is opened, if I might

² Matt. v. 26.

so speak, the sense of His displeasure is felt. Now, how much more must this be the case, when the soul reflects on its past life, when quite removed from all this scene, when nothing here below can charm, or allure, or console, or tempt it any longer?

Even if we had been told nothing of the state of the departed, from a consideration of these things, and from our knowing what the pains of conscience are, when left to itself, we might have supposed that to be waiting for the Judgment, and to be removed from all things here in which the soul can take delight, must be awful beyond all description; to say nothing of the powers of darkness, and of those spirits of good and evil which may then bear the soul to its destination,—when their work and ours is done.

Since, therefore, there are two states so important to us, in one of which we shall continue to be until the great Day of final retribution, and continue to be there for perhaps a far longer space of time than we shall be in this world, we know not how much of mercy and goodness, and how much benefit to us, may be contained in this one Article of the Creed, that CHRIST descended into the place of the dead. By going there HIMSELF after tasting of the bitterness of death HE seems to say to His faithful followers, “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast,”—“till the LORD shall come out of His place,”—and “the earth shall no more cover her slain³.”

“I must work the works of HIM that sent ME,” said our LORD HIMSELF, “while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work⁴.” HE therefore, like ourselves, had His appointed day, and His work to do, and the night of death coming on. And HE finished His work, and rested in the grave. HE rested throughout the seventh day, the Sabbath-day, and thereby fulfilled again what had been written, that GOD rested on the seventh day from all His work. And as thereby HE blessed that Sabbath, so also has HE blessed that rest which remaineth for the people of God. They who sat in the darkness of the grave “have seen a great light; to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up⁵.”

³ Isa. xxvi. 20, 21.

⁴ John ix. 4.

⁵ Ps. xxiii. 4. Luke i. 79.

Death is now no more death to the faithful Christian, but a rest from his labours, and his works follow him. All things appertaining to this world he hath left behind; but his works follow him; wherever he is, there are they also; in his Sabbath of rest after his labours.

And where he is, there is CHRIST also; for HE hath said, Where I am, there shall My servant be. HE hath hid them in the shadow of His hand⁶; they are hidden in the rock, as Moses was by the ALMIGHTY HIMSELF when HE passed by⁷; they are hidden in the rock together with CHRIST; for His sepulchre was in a rock⁸: nay, they are hidden in that Rock which is CHRIST HIMSELF⁹, until GOD shall arise to shake terribly the earth¹.

Very good for us is it that we should think often, deeply, continually, not only of Heaven and eternity, but of the spirits of the dead, and of "just men made perfect,"—of them who are released from the burden of the flesh, and are waiting in awful and blissful silence for the revelation of the great Day. It is no longer called to the Christian the kingdom of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, but of holy Apostles, and of Martyrs, and of Saints who have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb²." It is no longer the bosom of Abraham, but it is to be with JESUS CHRIST in Paradise.

Whatever their state is, they are in peace, in security and safety; no evil spirit can lead them astray; nothing can harm them more, or lead them into the ways of sin.

It is good for us to think of them; it is good for us to draw near to them, by living even now, as far as we can, like them, by withdrawing from the world, by loving silence and solitude; by learning more and more to commune with our own heart in the secret stillness of our chamber, and to be still. Thus did the first Christians strive to be already dead to the world, departing out of it even while alive below, and were lost to the world, that they might live to God. Very many, we read of, princes, and nobles, and rich men, gave up all their worldly honours and wealth; they were seen no more by the world, but spent their time together in desert places in unceasing prayer. A great

⁶ Isaiah xlix. 2.

⁷ Exod. xxxiii. 22.

⁸ Matt. xxvii. 60.

⁹ 1 Cor. x. 4.

¹ Isaiah ii. 19.

² Rev. vii. 14.

and good Bishop and Preacher, St. Chrysostom, in preaching to a corrupt and luxurious city, appealed to these things as facts known to them all; and gives an account of the holiness, the humility, the devotion of those persons who had altogether retired from the world, such as would seem in these days beyond belief.

We have undertaken the same profession at our Baptism, as they did, to be dead to the world, to be buried with Christ; and if we hope to be with them after death, we must live now with the same spirit as they did.

If we cannot give up all our time, as they did, yet all of us may find some set and fixed time for retirement and devotion, some time for serious reflection on those great changes that await us. All of us can find more than we do. "It is better," says the Wise Man, "to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting:" and why is it? "because it is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart³." The reason why mourning is good, is because it naturally leads us to the contemplation of "the end of all men:" and every thing is so far good as it has this effect on us; for he that remembereth the end shall not do amiss.

Reflections such as these, will lead us to enter into these subjects of our belief, not as matters of idle and curious speculation, but as most concerning wholesome truths, which it will be well for us to inquire into with all possible attention, and to reflect upon as most intimately concerning and momentous.

To conclude: on a late occasion we considered the burial of our LORD's Body, we observed that we have reason to see and acknowledge with unfeigned thankfulness that our Blessed LORD, by the history of His own burial, and throughout the Scripture, has taught us that we are allowed to treat with all reverence and respect the mortal remains of the dead.

So also by His descent into Hell has he sanctified and blessed the place of our souls: every trial in this world has HE sanctified by His own example, and by His presence upon earth, showing the bright light of His footsteps going before; nor does HE leave us when we depart into that unknown and dark

³ Eccles. vii. 2.

world of spirits, but by His descent into that place of the dead, to the soul as it departs from the body HE seems to say, "Fear not; for I am with thee:" in that fearful tempest, when the water-floods run over us⁴, when we are in the deep waters where no ground is⁵, when earth is departing from beneath our feet, then we feel His hand, and hear His voice, saying, "It is I, be not afraid⁶."

⁴ Psalm lxx. 15.

⁵ Psalm lxix. 1, 2.

⁶ Matt. xiv. 27.

SERMON CCLXXXIX.

HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD.

ROMANS x. 9.

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the LORD JESUS, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

OF all the miracles and wonderful works of God, the greatest which we know is the Resurrection of CHRIST from the grave. Many are the miracles which have been wrought since that time, such as we read of in the Acts of the holy Apostles; but without this they are all as nothing, for they all arise out of this. And many are the miracles recorded throughout the Old Testament, but they are all subordinate, and subservient, and secondary to this; they have indeed, for the most part, some relation to it: as the stars borrow their light from the sun, so all other miracles derive their light from this one great miracle of the Resurrection. If this were wanting, all other miracles would be as nothing to us; but set by the side of the Resurrection of CHRIST they all come out and speak to us with a new meaning.

Thus, to take the first and the greatest of all, the Creation of the world; when all the things that we behold with our eyes and man himself came into existence out of nothing, at the word spoken of God. But now that all this is not to be compared with the Resurrection of CHRIST from the grave, is evident from this circumstance, that whereas the Jews kept the seventh day in the week, to commemorate the Creation of the world, yet the Chris-

tian Church has set aside the seventh day in order to keep more particularly the first day; of so much greater importance to us is CHRIST's rising from the dead, than the making of all the worlds. And indeed the Creation of the world itself shines as it were with the light of the Resurrection; for on the first day God said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" a token and pledge of the true light, the light of the New Creation of God, arising from the grave on this day. As much therefore as a heavenly life is above an earthly life, so much is our rising from the dead in CHRIST of greater importance than our first Creation and all the worlds which we behold.

In like manner, if we take all the other miracles of the Old Testament, we shall find that they are as nothing without the Resurrection of CHRIST; but that they are all more or less signs or shadows of it.

The flood itself teaches us, that God is going to destroy the old world entirely, and, after washing it by the waters of Baptism with CHRIST's blood, to form a new world; Noah, the eighth person, with those that were with him in the ark, being alone saved and brought into this new world, as CHRIST, Who rose from the dead on the eighth day, will save those who are with HIM in the ark of His Church¹.

God brought His chosen people through the Red Sea, and destroyed Pharaoh and his host therein; but this wonderful history, which is "written for our learning," is nothing to us, if it were not that it sets before us in a lively picture that great truth which is every thing to us; that we are in CHRIST brought through the Red Sea of water and blood at Baptism by His Resurrection; and thereby set on our way to the heavenly Canaan.

Or again, when Joshua brought the Israelites through the river Jordan, as on dry land, and destroyed their enemies before them in Canaan; what does this pourtray, but CHRIST passing through the grave, without being overwhelmed, together with the ark of His Church, taking from thence twelve living stones², to be the foundation of His spiritual temple; and overcoming all our enemies before us, as long as we are obedient unto HIM?

¹ 1 Peter iii. 20, 21.

² Joshua iv. 3.

In like manner, if we take the other various miracles that followed, we shall find that they have some reference to CHRIST's overcoming the great enemy by His Resurrection, and that they are all of them nothing to us, if it were not for this.

When Joshua entered into Jericho, the walls fell down, and he saved none in that accursed city but Rahab, who had the scarlet thread held out before the door: what is this but CHRIST, in His victory over the grave, taking possession of this wicked world, and saving His Church, which has the blood of the Lamb sprinkled on her door? Nothing was saved in the destruction of that city but the gold and silver that could stand the fire, and the brass and iron, to form "vessels for the temple of God³," as none of our works will stand, but those that are able to endure the fire of that judgment which is to be in CHRIST.

In like manner, when Gideon with only a chosen few out of a great army entered into the camp of Midian, and overcame in a miraculous manner, with nothing more than the blowing of trumpets in the night, and with lights which had been hid in empty pitchers⁴, it is obvious to all that it represents CHRIST, by His Resurrection, entering upon the darkness of this world; by His ministers, with the trumpet of the Gospel, and His light shining before men through mean earthen vessels, soon to be broken in death; the light shining in darkness, and the darkness comprehending it not.

And so, likewise, when Samson arose at midnight, and carried away the gates and bars of the heathen city of Gaza, what is this sign of his miraculous strength, but our LORD's breaking down the gates and bars of hell and the grave, and carrying them away with HIM, so that we are able and allowed to follow HIM⁵?

Again, if we come to a later age, under the kings, we shall find, I think, the same in the miracles of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. When Elijah, for instance, restored the dead child of the widow of Zarephath to life, by stretching himself three times on the dead child, what is this but a sign of our dead nature being restored again to life by the death and resurrection of CHRIST? And the same miracle being again repeated, by Elisha stretching himself on a dead child, under circumstances

³ Joshua vi. 17, 19.

⁴ Judges vii. 20.

⁵ Judges xvi. 3.

so very similar, what is this but to draw our attention to the great meaning of it ⁶? Or when, after being hid in the wilderness for three years, Elijah brought down fire upon the sacrifice, and abundance of rain from heaven, what is this but our LORD being hid for three days in the grave, and then sending down the fire of the HOLY SPIRIT, and raining down righteousness from heaven by the ⁷dews of the HOLY GHOST, the waters of Baptism, and the times of refreshing? And afterwards, when Elijah, together with Elisha, smote the waters of Jordan, and went over on dry ground, and then afterwards ascended in a fiery chariot into heaven, it is very apparent to all that this signifies our LORD's passing through the grave, and then ascending up into heaven ⁷.

Now, all these, being great and wonderful miracles at the time, show the power and Presence of God to that generation; yet to us they have a double signification and power, inasmuch as they set before us that great corner-stone and foundation of our faith, which we commemorate at this time in the Resurrection of CHRIST. As when the sun is risen in the sky his image is seen in so many objects, so miracles and works of God seem to bear in themselves the likeness of CHRIST's Resurrection,—of CHRIST the Sun of Righteousness rising from the grave.

We read of Elisha that he died and was buried: it might appear, as man judgeth, as if all were over with him; but not so. We read, again, that a dead man was “cast into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet ⁸.” So that not only was there life in his dead bones, but a great deal more than this, they were able to give life. Now when we learn this account in the Old Testament, humanly speaking, we cannot see the meaning of it; we cannot understand for what end it was wrought or recorded, taking it merely by itself, no more than we can understand the types and shadows of the Law; which of themselves had no meaning: excepting when they are considered as speaking of CHRIST, and then they appeal to us with a very clear and loud voice, even unto the end of the world.

But more particularly is this the case when we come to our LORD's own miracles, when HE went about in the flesh: it might

⁶ 1 Kings xvii. 21. 2 Kings iv. 34.

⁷ 1 Kings xviii. 38. 2 Kings ii. 11.

⁸ 2 Kings xiii. 21.

be shown to our great edification and profit that every miracle which HE worked had a great and new meaning given to it when considered in the light of His Resurrection : we might almost say it was the power of His Resurrection ; or HE HIMSELF, Who is the Resurrection and the Life, going about, turning leprosy to new flesh, giving strength to limbs dead with the palsy ; and sight to eyes that were like the eyes of the dead before : although His sacred Body had not yet been nailed to the cross as a sacrifice for us, and HE had not yet risen from the grave for our justification, yet already HE went about forgiving sins ; the touch of His Body already quickened our mortal bodies, raised the dead, and was full of virtue, which was going forth from it, and healing them all : already did he say of the Bread and of the Cup, "This is My Body," and "This is My Blood," although His Body was not yet broken, nor His Blood shed on the tree.

So that we may say, that even when HE was alive the power of His Resurrection was seen in all circumstances : none of these things were understood until HE arose from the grave : then only was it fully known what all these things fully meant.

Now, as all the works of God in Holy Scripture were thus full of CHRIST's Resurrection beforehand, much more is it the case, since that time, with every thing which is of God.

We keep the first day of the week to commemorate the Resurrection of CHRIST ; this day goes first, and all the other days grow out of it, and follow it ; showing us that the whole week is to be to us full of CHRIST's Resurrection.

On the first day of the creation light was made ; but unless light had been first made, all the creations of God, which were made on the other days of the week, could not have been at all ; there would have been no day and night. Light was made first of all, in order to make day and night, in which other things might be made. So also is the Resurrection of CHRIST, it is the first day, all things grow out of this, all days of the week rise out of the Sunday : as light was first made, so CHRIST is the First-born from the dead, the First-born of the new creation, making all things new.

But now the question arises, What is all this to us ? It is every thing : for as the Resurrection of CHRIST was seen in every work of God of old, so must it now be seen in us : there is no

miracle of God greater than a thoroughly converted Christian soul : the ALMIGHTY GOD, Who alone worketh great marvels, is seen now, not in such miracles as HE did of old before the carnal Israelites, but in the regeneration of the soul, in the works of the new man ; and all these set forth the Resurrection of CHRIST, the “ putting on the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Now, in the ears of people in general, all this sounds like idle words, for they judge of what they see around them ; and it must be confessed that, in the world at large in the present day, there are no great signs of CHRIST’s Resurrection.

The picture or history of the world as it now is, may perhaps be very well said to be contained in newspapers ; and certainly, if we judge from them, from the speeches that people make in public places, from the accounts of crimes that abound, from unjust wars carried on abroad, and from the general tone in which people speak, act, and think, there is no great evidence of CHRIST’s Resurrection ; excepting from the outward existence of the Church and its ministers standing forth in the eyes of all men. “ If CHRIST be not risen, ye are yet in your sins,” says St. Paul ; certainly men are “ yet in their sins,” does it, then, follow that CHRIST is not risen ?

The lives of many, perhaps of most men are, upon the whole, much the same as they would have been if CHRIST had not risen.

St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, gives a very fearful picture of the heathen world ; and in his Second Epistle to Timothy he describes what the state of the world will be in these last days : and if you compare the two accounts together, you will find a remarkable correspondence between the two, with this difference, that in the last they have the light given them which they had not in the former. Whatever discrepancies of opinion now prevail in the world, all parties will agree in this, that the description of St. Paul is being now fulfilled in our times ; that these are the last and perilous times which are foretold, if we may judge from the corruption which prevails. Where, therefore, it may be asked, is the power of the Resurrection to be seen in the Christian world, if it bears so close a resemblance to the heathen world of old ?

Or, if we come to form our estimate and judgment of things, not from the nation at large, and the account we have of mankind in the public papers, but from the state of things we know to exist around us in the place where we live, we must come to the same conclusion, I fear; that for the most part men are yet in their sins; and therefore CHRIST the true Light is not risen upon them.

To take, for instance, this parish. Must it not be said that men in general live and die without the fear of God, or the knowledge of CHRIST? I say even die: for when persons come to their death-bed, and are exhorted to confess their sins to ALMIGHTY GOD; or to His minister, according to the direction of St. James, "in order that they be healed;" instead of doing this, they seem surprised at being asked to confess their sins at all; they say they have done no harm, that they believe in CHRIST, and that God is merciful; and yet these very persons, in some cases, are dying under deadly sins unrepented of, with consciences so dead and seared and hardened, that they speak as if they had no sins to confess. Surely this is to die without fear.

Or, to take the view of things which lies most on the surface: the great proof of the state of the heart is prayer and devotion. I will not ask how many in this parish call together their families for private prayer morning and evening; I will not ask how men pray by themselves privately, for we may judge from what comes to the surface. There are public prayers and reading of the Scriptures in church twice every day of the week, and twice on Sunday; yet how many are there who never come to church more than once a week, on Sunday evenings, and then most assuredly not to pray, for he who comes to pray will come often; but because others do. Now, I cannot say that this is very different to what it would have been, if we were not Christians. Where then, it may be asked again, is the power of CHRIST'S Resurrection?

This, therefore, proves what has been said, that there is no greater miracle or marvel upon earth than a good Christian, such a one as lives up to the Gospel of CHRIST in all things, and that, as in every other miracle of God, so especially in him will be

seen the power of CHRIST's Resurrection: to him CHRIST is risen indeed, he is no longer in his sins.

But miracles of God are not often found; or else they would not be miracles. A young man, in these days, who is pure in heart; a rich man, who is poor in spirit; a poor man, who is contented to be poor, and not desirous to obtain whatever he can; a man of business, who would rather defraud himself than his neighbour; a man or woman, who—whether old or young, or rich or poor, at leisure or in service—who always labours to have a conscience void of offence, both towards God and man, who loves God with all his heart and soul and strength, or is endeavouring to do so; and therefore is always taken up in self-denial and prayer, or works of charity;—such a one is the wonderful work of God; he is a living sign and proof of CHRIST's Resurrection. He does more to prove the truth of CHRIST's Resurrection than all the books that ever were written: he does more to confirm this truth in the world, even than a sensible miracle would do, such as were wrought of old.

Happy is the minister who finds such a one in his flock: he will do more by his living example and his prayers than many sermons: he will do much to comfort and support the sad and sinking heart of his pastor, when he is almost tempted to sit down in despair and sorrow; or, as Jeremiah of old, to hide himself in the wilderness, and to depart from them. Still, we cannot but hope there may be many such known to God in secret, although certainly there is not much evidence or sign of it before men.

Things were once very different; very many were there who were living monuments of CHRIST's Resurrection; so that it might spiritually be said of the Christian, as was said of CHRIST HIMSELF, "In that he died, he died unto sin once, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God: death hath no more dominion over him." "He hath passed from death unto life."

We may be sure of this, that no one will have part in the last resurrection, who is not already risen together with CHRIST; no one will be free from that second death who is not now risen together with CHRIST from the death of sin.

“Blessed and holy is he,” says St. John in the Revelation, “that hath part in the first Resurrection: on such the second death hath no power⁹.” This first Resurrection we may well suppose to be that which is so often spoken of in Scripture, whereby our souls are even now risen together with CHRIST; over such a one death hath no more dominion; sorrow and sin, which worketh death, do not reach him, even here; and over him the second death hath no power.

⁹ Rev. xx. 6.

SERMON CCXC.

HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN.

ACTS i. 9.

“And when HE had spoken these things, while they beheld, HE was taken up; and a cloud received HIM out of their sight.”

THERE is one day in the year when we commemorate our LORD's ascending into heaven,—Holy Thursday, or Ascension-day, forty days after Easter, and ten days before Whitsuntide. But this great day is not so much remembered as it ought to be; and whether it is the cause or the effect of this, certain it is that CHRISTians do not realize and bring home to themselves this great doctrine and article of the Creed,—that CHRIST ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the Right Hand of GOD.

Now, the Scriptural account of this most wonderful circumstance is short, but full of interest: we read, that for forty days after His rising from the grave, our LORD continued upon earth, being seen continually by His disciples, during all that time; now by one, and then by another; in various places, in Jerusalem, and in Galilee; in secret rooms, on an open mountain, or by the sea-side; by single persons, or by all the disciples together; or by two in the way, or by five hundred brethren at once; and during all this time HE was “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of GOD¹,” that is, HE was teaching them concerning His Church, how HE would have it appointed and governed till His return; and at the end of forty days, when on one occasion

¹ Acts i. 3.

H^E appeared to them in Jerusalem, H^E led them out as far as to Bethany or the Mount of Olives, "and H^E lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while H^E blessed them, H^E was parted from them, and carried up into heaven²."

The same loving-kindness and tender care for mankind which brought the SON of GOD down from heaven at first, led H^IM after the Resurrection to continue still for forty days with His disciples upon earth, absent from heaven, and away from His FATHER'S house, at Whose Right Hand there is fulness of joy; in order to encourage and establish their faith, and to instruct and guide them. And it may here be mentioned, that the number forty is often taken in Holy Scripture to signify something of this kind: thus when our LORD was born, for forty days H^E continued in the manger at Bethlehem, but on the fortieth day H^E was presented unto GOD in His temple at Jerusalem; and for those forty days His mother was considered unclean, according to the Jewish Law, but on the fortieth day was the Purification, when she appeared before GOD; in like manner, as on this day the Church of the first-born was made clean in the sight of GOD, when H^E, the Lamb that was slain, appeared "in the presence of GOD for us." Thus, also, for forty days had our LORD been fasting in the wilderness with the wild beasts; in like manner, perhaps, as H^E had been for forty days with the cattle in the stable. And the same was set forth in the Old Testament, when Elijah was for forty days in the wilderness, living a sort of Divine or Angelical life, without food, and conversing with GOD; and for forty days was Moses in the Mount fasting, and with GOD, receiving the Law; as for forty days now did the disciples see the Face of CHRIST after H^E was risen from the grave, receiving from H^IM the laws of His spiritual kingdom. Forty was the number of years while the children of Israel were trained by GOD in the wilderness, on the borders of the promised land. For forty days was the rain descending at the flood, before the waters bore up the ark; but on the fortieth day, on the self-same day, Noah entered into the ark³: so also in the new kingdom of CHRIST, on the fortieth day the ark of CHRIST'S Church was set loose on the face of the waters,—the waters of Baptism,—to

² Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

³ Gen. vii. 12, 13.

carry CHRIST'S chosen unto the everlasting hills, that new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Such, then, is in Scripture the period of preparation when any new dispensation is coming in; and there was therefore some great reason in the Divine counsels, that for forty days our SAVIOUR should be upon earth, preparing His disciples, and establishing the laws of His Church, before HE left them and ascended up, in their sight, into heaven.

Now, of this His departure from them into heaven, no further account is given than this, that "while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as HE went up," two angels appeared to them and said, "This same JESUS, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." HE shall come in like manner; for as a cloud received HIM out of their sight, so shall HE return in the clouds of heaven; and with the same glorified Body, so that every eye shall see HIM, and they also that pierced HIM.

Thus did HE take His last leave of His beloved disciples, and was seen no more by them on earth; but in other parts of Holy Scripture something is said of His arrival at those blessed abodes, when His warfare was now accomplished, and of His being received into heaven. Thus in the twenty-fourth Psalm we have the angels speaking to each other, like the host that accompanied a conqueror on his return to his own city, talking with those that are in the city: the angels and saints that accompany our LORD say, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in." And then the angels in heaven are represented as answering from within, "Who is the King of glory?" And the answer is, "It is the LORD strong and mighty, even the LORD strong in battle." And in like manner, it is supposed that the same conversation of the angels is described in the sixty-third chapter of Isaiah, "Who is this that cometh from Edom," *i. e.* from the land of the enemy, "with dyed garments from Bozrah?" *i. e.* the stronghold of the great enemy? "this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength?" To this our LORD is represented as replying, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." And then the angels say, "Wherefore art THOU red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?" And the

answer is, "I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with ME." This expression of our LORD being "red in His apparel," or marked with blood, is like that of the Apostle, who speaks of the high-priest entering into the holy of holies, "not without blood⁴." In the New Testament, also, something is said of this our LORD's triumphant return to heaven; for we read in the Epistle to the Ephesians, that "when HE ascended up on high, HE led captivity captive;" and to the Colossians St. Paul says, "having spoiled principalities and powers, HE made a show of them openly," *i. e.* like a great conqueror showing tokens of His victory in the sight of all.

But no image or mention of our LORD's ascension into heaven sets it before us in so lively a manner as that type, which was kept by the Jews in a continual observance under the Law, which is particularly dwelt upon in the Epistle to the Hebrews, when the high-priest entered within the veil alone once every year⁵ while the people waited without for his return; thus representing our High-priest entering into "a more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands," as our Intercessor and Mediator, offering up the Sacrifice of His own Blood. And here it may be observed, that if the shadow of this day was religiously observed by the Jews under the Law, how ought the yearly memorial of this day itself to be kept by us?

Now, here we have a great substantial fact, which has occurred in this our world in the very sight of men, and a doctrine most concerning connected with it; it is, indeed, one of those foundation-stones, as it were, upon which our faith is built. Let us consider, then, what wonderful and mysterious things are contained in this one article of the Creed, that even this our human nature hath in CHRIST ascended into the heaven of heavens, and CHRIST's Manhood is taken into God; having all powers of the world to come, principalities, and dominions, put under His feet, as the SON of MAN. This it is which was shown beforehand in Enoch, who "walked with God, and he was not; for God took him⁶." This was set forth in Elijah, when he was taken up bodily and alive into heaven, with a chariot of fire, and horses of fire⁷. This was prefigured in Moses, when he went up from the

⁴ Heb. ix. 7. 12.

⁵ Ibid. vii. 27; ix. 7. 12.

⁶ Gen. v. 24.

⁷ 2 Kings ii. 11.

sight of man, and was hidden on the top of the Mount with God, so that his face was covered with glory⁸. And this our Blessed LORD HIMSELF showed in a wonderful mystery, when HE went up to the top of the mountain and was transfigured, and His Body, although one and the same, was filled with unspeakable glory and brightness. Thus did HE, in great love and condescension, teach us how by His Almighty power, these our frail bodies may be changed into the likeness of His glorious Body, and how HE HIMSELF might still continue to have the same human Body, but full of Divine glory and immortality.

For forty days HE was known, seen, heard, and felt, to afford sensible assurance and certainty, not only of His Resurrection, but also of His Ascension, to certify to us that really and truly and substantially HE, with one and the same risen and glorified Body, did ascend into heaven,—into the heaven of heavens, “far above all heavens⁹,” as the High-priest into the holy of holies: even the SON of MAN, HE that is flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, hath arisen from this earth, on which HE once walked, as we; making to HIMSELF a glorious way, through which His ransomed may pass. As the Prophet Micah has said, in promising that God shall gather the remnant of Israel: “The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it; and their King shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them¹.”

And now what is the lesson to us? Our duty cannot be better expressed than by our own beautiful prayer for this day, that like as we do believe our LORD to have ascended into the Heavens, so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with HIM continually dwell. But then how are we thither to ascend? We know of CHRIST that His Body has actually ascended into that place unspeakable of all blessedness, which we call Heaven; and we know also that the bodies of the faithful after their forty years wandering in this wilderness shall in the end thither ascend, in like manner endued with some inconceivable power; but how are we now thither to ascend in heart and mind, in affections and thoughts? Now, this ascending into Heaven in thought and

⁸ Exod. xxxiv. 29.

⁹ Ephes. iv. 10.

¹ Micah ii. 13.

affection is quite as real and truly made as that of our bodies will be hereafter ; for so it is ever spoken of in Holy Scripture ; and of course it necessarily arises from this, that where our treasure is, there will the heart be, and where the heart is, there in some sense are we. Our LORD HIMSELF even when HE lived among mankind in the flesh, yet in some unspeakable mysterious manner was ever in Heaven, not only as GOD, but even as GOD and MAN ; for HE said to Nicodemus, speaking of himself, "HE that came down from heaven, even the SON of MAN which is in heaven²." Without attempting to say any thing of this mystery, yet we may observe, that as this was different from our LORD's ascension afterwards, of which the Creed speaks, so in some sense also even to us there is a way of loosing the hold which earthly things have upon us, and dwelling in Heaven. As Moses went up alive into the Mount, to be with GOD in fasting and prayer ; and as CHRIST on the Mount where HE was transfigured, was in unspeakable communion with GOD ; so may we in some manner, even while we are in the body, go up to be in the Mount with GOD. When Moses came down, there was an awful glory on his countenance, that men dared not look upon him ; and when CHRIST came down, there was it is supposed a glory on His Face, so that men ran to embrace HIM : and it has been said that when holy persons have been with GOD in prayer, that something of the same kind happens when they come forth among men,—that there is, as it were, a glory on their countenances, so that their ways and words partake of something which shows they have been with GOD. Now, this is said as a poetical figure implying that men become transformed in the renewing of their minds, when they live in devotion. But all this is not a mere figure of speech ; there is a very concerning truth contained in it ; there is a way of mortifying the body, and all things appertaining to this life, so as to be in fact elsewhere in a better world. There is an old Latin saying, that the mind is the man, that a man's self even in this world is his mind or soul ; and where his mind is, there may he be said to be. All bodies are kept down on the earth by their weight ; and in like manner the souls of men are kept down to earth by the weight

² John iii. 12.

of earthly cares and gross affections : as a bodily substance will spring upward when the weight is removed that kept it below ; so in like manner when some strong earthly affection is taken away, the soul springs upward more readily to God.

Perhaps the great lesson and duty which this doctrine should teach us cannot be better shown than by that sacred illustration which Holy Scripture itself affords in connexion with it. When any thing important occurs in the New Testament, we naturally look to the Old, to see what teaching is there contained in the marvellous fulness of God's Word ; and as this great event of CHRIST's ascension happens on Thursday the fifth day of the week, we look to the first chapter of Genesis : here we find that God on this day made "the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." Now, as the expression of "the waters bringing forth the moving creature that hath life," evidently prefigures those waters of Baptism wherein children are brought forth unto the true life which is in God ; so those birds that fly above our heads set forth not only our Lord ascending into Heaven, but the necessity and duty of our ascending thither also together with Him. I mention this because as our Lord, when He taught, said, "Consider the lilies of the field," and "behold the fowls of the air ;" so to a Christian the very sight of those birds that fly around, or sing towards heaven, ought to minister to real practical edification : instead of being merely a subject to please the fancy of idle worldly men, it ought to point out Divine wisdom never to be forgotten, and suggest thoughts and prayers of most serious contemplation ; as they speak to us of CHRIST having ascended into Heaven on the very day of the week when they were made, and remind us that our bodies also must ascend to Heaven at the last, so also are they to us a continual warning that we should even now in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell.

Little children, now understand and remember what the birds are to teach you ; and when you see them rise toward Heaven, think not only of the Thursday when they were made, but of Holy Thursday, and its touching instructive lessons. Your hearts are as yet more like those of "the fowls of the air,"

according to our LORD's own command, than are those of grown men. The lesson your SAVIOUR says that the birds are to teach us all is to have no care for the morrow. It is carefulness that keeps down to earth the hearts of men, so that they cannot ascend to be with CHRIST. To be heavenly-minded is to be free from worldly care.

When Moses came down from the Mount, the people had fallen away, and even Aaron the priest; and when CHRIST came down from the Mount, even His own disciples were failing for want of faith: let us take heed lest love should wax cold in us who have now to wait for His coming down; let us endeavour to behold HIM now that HE is ascended, as Elisha did Elijah; and ever more and more to strive to keep the minds of little children.

SERMON CCXCI.

SITTETH AT THE RIGHT HAND¹ OF GOD.

HEBREWS i. 3.

“When HE had by HIMSELF purged our sins, HE sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

THAT CHRIST ascended into heaven, and that HE will come from thence to judge the quick and the dead, are two events, of which the one is past, the other yet to come; but between these Articles of the Creed is one respecting the time now present, that HE “sitteth on the right hand of GOD, the FATHER ALMIGHTY.” It is indeed the end and purpose for which HE ascended, that HE might sit on the Right Hand of GOD. Now this as well as His ascending into heaven we find spoken of in many places of Scripture, as a point of doctrine very concerning to us; it is put forth by our Blessed LORD HIMSELF as a subject of the greatest importance in the right belief of HIM; it is indeed the one thing which HE selected, beyond all others, from the Scriptures to leave in the minds of the unbelieving Pharisees, when HE last taught them in the Temple: HE referred them to the 110th Psalm, saying, “David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my LORD, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool².” And afterwards to Caiaphas the High Priest on the night of His condemnation,

¹ “At the right hand,” Baptismal Service and Catechism. “On the right hand,” Morning and Evening Prayer.

² Luke xx. 42.

“Hereafter shall the SON of MAN sit on the right hand of the power of God³.”

If we look to the Old Testament we find this great object of our belief set forth in a very lively picture in the history of Joseph: after he had been wonderfully delivered from prison and from death, Pharaoh thus speaks to him, “Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph’s hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt⁴.” In words similar to these it is written of CHRIST, “Wherefore GOD also hath highly exalted HIM, and given HIM a name which is above every name; that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow⁵.” Not only do his brethren bow down to Joseph, but he is set over Egypt also; and of CHRIST, not only is it said, “I have set My King upon My holy hill of Sion,” but also, “I shall give THEE the Heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.” Thus David was at first for seven years King over Judah only, his own tribe, in Hebron; but afterwards for forty years HE reigned at Jerusalem. Forty years is sometimes put for the whole period of the Christian Church.

Now, some might suppose that all the prophecies and figures on this subject are fulfilled by the establishment of our LORD’s Kingdom upon earth, which we see on all sides; but certainly a great deal more than this is intended, when such particular mention is made in Scripture of a power on the Right Hand of God being given to our LORD on His ascending to heaven. Thus in the parable our LORD speaks of HIMSELF under the figure of one who “went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return⁶.” He goes away in order to receive a kingdom, and then to return. In wonderful agreement and explanation of this expression in the parable, we find it so often mentioned in Holy Scripture, that when our LORD ascended into heaven, some great kingly power was conferred on HIM. We are taught more than once, that it was then that the eighth

³ Luke xxii. 69.

⁴ Gen. xli. 40. 42, 43.

⁵ Phil. ii. 9, 10.

⁶ Luke xix. 12.

Psalm was fulfilled, which says, "LORD, what is man, that THOU art mindful of him? and the son of man, that THOU visitest him? THOU makest him to have dominion of the works of Thy hands, and THOU hast put all things in subjection under his feet." Now St. Paul informs us, in the Epistle to the Hebrews and in his first Epistle to the Corinthians⁷, that this was spoken of CHRIST at His Ascension, in words too long to be here mentioned. St. Peter too, apparently in reference to the same, says, "Who has gone into heaven and is on the Right Hand of GOD, angels and principalities and powers being made subject unto HIM." And to this our LORD HIMSELF seems to allude, after HE had risen from the grave, when HE says, "All power is given ME in heaven and in earth." And in the Revelation, unto the LAMB that was slain all power and glory is given⁸, and thanks to HIM, "the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY," because HE has taken to Him His great power and hath reigned⁹.

But here it may be asked, How is it that at our LORD's Ascension, and after His Resurrection, it is said that all power and authority is given HIM, and all things are put under His feet; and that HE is on the Right Hand of Power? For as we believe HIM to be GOD equal to the FATHER, and by Whom all things were made, and are preserved, HE hath power equal to the FATHER from everlasting. How therefore can it be said that power is then given HIM, and that every knee shall bow to HIM, as if for the first time? In like manner it may be asked, How, at the Ascension, can the angels be inquiring of each other, Who is the King of Glory who is to be set over them? For they see the face of GOD always, and tremble before HIM, and do His will; by CHRIST they are made, and in HIM they live and move.

Now, in answer to this it must be observed, that all this is said of CHRIST, not as the SON of GOD, but as the SON of MAN: it is our poor human nature that is so highly exalted in JESUS CHRIST, and set on the right hand of GOD: it is that human nature which in CHRIST overcame the enemy, and returned with garments dyed in blood from Edom. And therefore our Blessed LORD says, "Hereafter ye shall see," not the SON of GOD, but "the SON of MAN, sitting on the Right hand of Power." And it may

⁷ Heb. x. 13. 1 Cor. xv. 25.

⁸ Rev. v. 12.

⁹ Rev. xi. 17.

be observed, that usually when our LORD speaks of His coming to judgment, HE speaks of HIMSELF as the SON of MAN; "Ye shall see the SON of MAN," or "The SON of MAN shall come." The eighth Psalm, in like manner, is spoken especially of man, of man first of all in Adam, being set over all the creatures of GOD, over "all sheep and oxen, and the beasts of the field." "LORD, what is *man*, that thou art mindful of him?" And yet Holy Scripture informs us, that all that Psalm is written of the Second Adam—CHRIST JESUS; for HE was made for a while a little lower than the angels, in order to crown HIM with worship; that all things are to be put under His feet, and are already, excepting one.

For those of mankind who are in JESUS CHRIST do already tread under their feet every enemy, except one, and that is death: good men are subject to temporal death, to the death of the body still, but every other enemy, all the power of the enemy is overcome by them: and the last enemy, which is death, shall also be put under their feet for ever at the day of judgment; for then "there shall be no more death."

It is not, therefore, the ascension of CHRIST alone, but His sitting on the Right Hand of God, which is brought before us in Holy Scripture as a matter of so much concern to us. Let us, then, consider how great a privilege to us this is. To speak after the manner of men, how is every nation always studious that one of themselves should be in the court of a foreign king, to represent their interests, to speak for them, and through whom they themselves might find access? For even we, says the Apostle, have through HIM admission and approach to the throne of grace. "Having therefore," he says, "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of JESUS, by a new and living way, which HE hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith¹." As a ship is secure and steadfast when its anchor is firmly fixed in the land, so amid the waves and storms of this life may our confidence be, if we have our hearts with CHRIST in heaven, as the same inspired writer beautifully expresses it: "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and sted-

¹ Hebrews x. 19—22.

fast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even JESUS, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec²."

Consider then, I say, what great and unspeakable privileges and blessings are connected with this doctrine, and brought near to us by faith. "I go," said our Blessed SAVIOUR, "and prepare a place for you; I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." In that blessed place where CHRIST is on the Right Hand of God, there will HE receive those that are "accounted worthy to obtain that world," that they may be with HIM: from thence will HE again return to this earth, and take them with HIM into that place which HE is preparing for them. "FATHER," said our Blessed LORD, in that memorable prayer, "I will that they also, whom THOU hast given ME, be with ME where I am; that they may behold My glory, which THOU hast given ME³." As St. Paul so often alludes to the doctrine of CHRIST's Resurrection to urge the necessity of our being risen with HIM upon earth, so does HE also to that of His being in heaven, as a reason for our being in mind and thought there with HIM. As HE continued forty days on earth after His Resurrection, so after they are risen with HIM in Baptism from the death of sin, have Christians to continue for their pilgrimage on earth, it may be for forty years of trial in the wilderness before they ascend to heaven; but to live as those whose treasure is in heaven, and whose hearts are therefore ever dwelling and abiding there. "If ye, then, be risen with CHRIST, seek those things which are above, where CHRIST sitteth on the Right Hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with CHRIST in God. When CHRIST, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with HIM in glory."

Consider what very concerning and unspeakable benefits to us are signified in this doctrine, that CHRIST is on the Right Hand of power. Surely, when our Blessed SAVIOUR says that "all power is given HIM in heaven and in earth," HE means some great and new power with regard to us, some power to be exercised for our benefit, if we are His true children. And when it

² Heb. vi. 19.

³ John xvii. 24.

is said that HE is sitting on the Right Hand of God ; or when HE is seen, as by St. Stephen at his death, standing at the Right Hand of God, this signifies, that whether HE is spoken of as sitting, *i. e.* in a state of rest after His labours, or as standing, *i. e.* as ready to succour and aid those who call to HIM, yet it is always, in both cases, at the Right Hand of power, *i. e.* with some wonderful power given unto HIM in His Church for our sakes ; power greater than was exercised by HIM here on earth before His death ; greater than was ever vouchsafed to man before CHRIST's Ascension into heaven. And thus our Blessed LORD says, "He that believeth on ME, the works that I do, shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My FATHER." And HE, at the same time, told His disciples it was expedient for them, it was for their advantage, HE should go away ; for if HE went away, HE would send the COMFORTER unto them.

Therefore we may see, that since CHRIST hath gone to heaven, and all power is given HIM, HE has in His Church, and through the HOLY SPIRIT, greater power to save those who come to HIM, than HE showed when HE was alive. And this was set forth in the account of the Prophet Elijah ascending up to heaven ; for we read that Elijah said unto Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing : nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee ; but if not, it shall not be so." In like manner, they who by faith see CHRIST when HE is gone from us into heaven, they in the SPIRIT, Which is sent from above, can do more than when HE was with them upon earth ; they can derive the double blessing of those who have not seen, and yet have believed ; for Elisha had a double portion of the spirit of Elijah ; and Elijah seems to be in Scripture a sign or figure of CHRIST in the days of His flesh ; and Elisha to represent rather the HOLY SPIRIT, and the Presence of CHRIST in His Church.

Now, this may serve to explain what is signified by the great power and authority which is said to be given to CHRIST after His Ascension, some power in His Church for our protection and

salvation ; some wonderful power in His Name, which they who believe in HIM and see HIM by faith after His Ascension, shall receive. " Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My Name," said our LORD to His disciples before HE left them ; " ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." And sometimes we are told that there is some great and peculiar power over evil spirits, which HE gives unto faithful Christians : for they are to tread under their feet serpents and scorpions, and all the power of the enemy.

And no doubt some wonderful efficacy for good Christians is wrought by His own intercessions for them at the throne of grace ; for HE is entered into the heaven of heavens as our Intercessor and Mediator : for this we know was the great point set forth of old in the Law, when it foreshadowed and prefigured our LORD'S entering into heaven. When on the great day of atonement, once in the year, the high-priest in white robes entered into the holy of holies, it was in order to offer sacrifice, and to intercede for the people.

In two points of view, therefore, have we Christians great and extraordinary privileges towards a holy life, since the Ascension of CHRIST : first, that we have in HIM a Mediator and Intercessor in heaven ; and secondly, that we have upon earth the great COMFORTER, Whom HE has sent down from the FATHER.

Now, how very important to us is this consideration ! for many baptized Christians go on as if they might live like heathens, and yet after all be at any time converted and received back, with all that abundant forgiveness and restoration which was held out to the poor gentiles, when they first heard of the Gospel and repented. But surely it is a very different thing for the children of light to live in darkness, than for those heathens who are said to have sat in the region of the shadow of death.

Nor indeed is our condition even like that of the Saints of God, whom we read of in the Bible before CHRIST ascended into Heaven ; for even they never had such promises of power and grace vouchsafed to them as we have. Certainly the falls and infirmities of good men recorded in Scripture may be not only warnings to us, but a consolation and encouragement when our repentance is as deep and as bitter as theirs was ; such as that

of the holy David and the Apostle St. Peter : we may humbly trust if they could repent and be accepted, there is the like mercy also for us.

But then we must never forget that our condition is very different from theirs ; not only because we know so much more, but because we have so much more power given us, if we seek for it aright, to will and to do what is pleasing to God.

The early Christians, when they speak of the sins or infirmities of the disciples or other saints of God in Scripture, they usually stop to observe that such good men fell before the HOLY SPIRIT was given ; and this they do not only out of regard and reverence to those who were friends of GOD and of CHRIST, but in order that they themselves might not presume, knowing that to whom much is given, of them much will be required. St. Peter, they observe, denied his LORD, and was very fearful, before CHRIST rose again and ascended ; but was afterwards fearless and full of faith.

“ And I, if I be lifted up from the earth,” said our LORD, “ will draw all men unto ME⁴,” which indeed HE spoke of His death, but in His death we may well suppose of His Ascension ; drawing all men unto HIM “ with the cords of a man,” as the SON of MAN in Heaven. And still more plainly at His Resurrection did HE speak of our being in HIM brought near to GOD when HE ascended to Heaven, “ Go unto My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My FATHER and your FATHER, and unto My GOD and your GOD ;” where it is evident that at our blessed LORD’s Ascension into heaven as SON of MAN, that GOD has become our FATHER and our GOD in a way that HE was not before.

Who is there so hardened, that his heart does not sink within him at the contemplation of these things, at the thought that we have been raised so high, and brought so near to GOD, and yet by our sins and careless lives have fallen so low ? “ We were by nature,” says St. Paul, “ the children of wrath, even as others. But GOD, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love, wherewith HE loved us, hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in CHRIST JESUS⁵.” Not only is CHRIST ascended and sitting on the Right Hand of Power, but we also

⁴ John xii. 32.

⁵ Eph. ii. 3, 4, 6.

are ascended, says the Apostle, and sitting together with Him. It was the thought of these things that made the good men in early ages so humble, their repentance so deep, their sense of holiness so high, their faith and love so great; while at the same time they thought themselves unworthy to sit at the feet of God's saints in heaven.

We also have the same blessings given unto us, the same power to do well, the same heaven to aspire to; why should not we endeavour to be as they?

SERMON CCXCII.

HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD.

MATTHEW xxv. 31, 32.

“When the SON of MAN shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with HIM, then shall HE sit upon the throne of His glory: and before HIM shall be gathered all nations: and HE shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.”

THAT men will be judged hereafter for the deeds done in the body, has been believed more or less by all nations of the world, and not by Christians only. The greatest of all heathen philosophers spent all his time in labouring to make men just and good, and was at last put to death for doing so. And one thing he said, among many others of the same kind, was this:—that he had heard a story, which implied, that when the soul departed from the body, and was stripped of wealth and honour, and all those things that blind the eyes of men upon earth, it was examined by a great Judge in the other world, and if it had done deeds of wickedness he found the marks or scars upon it, and inflicted punishment accordingly. This account, said that good philosopher, Socrates (for that was his name), may be true or not, but I so much apprehend that there may be something of this kind, that I would rather suffer all things than do wrong; and as long as I am allowed to live, I will go about entreating every man not to mind any evils of this life, not to mind suffering wrong or poverty or any thing else, but not to do wrong to any man on any account. So deeply impressed was this poor heathen

with the sense that there must be or might be a judgment in the next world; and he thought nothing else of any consequence when compared to it.

What therefore, it may be asked, does the Bible and the Apostles' Creed teach us on this momentous subject, which was not known before, or at least imagined and believed probable by good men? It makes known to us very much. In the first place, it adds an infinite weight to the certainty of that judgment. It was only guessed at before. In the next place, it declares it to be at the end of the world, the one great day, the day of judgment. Above all things, it has revealed to us that the great Judge is the SON of MAN, the great Friend of man, the SAVIOUR of man, GOD and Man in one Person, Who will come again at the end of the world. It has declared to us, that the judgment will be, not on deeds alone, but on the thoughts of the heart also. It has also made known to us many very important, and, if I may say it on so awful a subject, many interesting circumstances respecting it.

And these things are mostly declared to us in the New Testament; the day of judgment is not so often, so fully and openly brought forward in the Old Testament. And the reason may have been this, that GOD of His great mercy was pleased not to overwhelm the minds of good men with the thought of eternal judgment, and of heaven and hell, until His mercies in JESUS CHRIST were made known also: that a penitent and contrite soul might have a place of refuge to flee to, under considerations so very awful and terrible.

The first person whom we read of, as preaching the day of judgment, is Enoch; for the Apostle St. Jude says of him, "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the LORD cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all." But in many places some allusion to it occurs in the Old Testament, although it is not there so fully revealed, or so often spoken of, as in the New. Thus is it throughout the fiftieth Psalm; as, "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: . . . HE shall call the heaven from above; and the earth, that HE may judge His people." And in the Book of Ecclesiastes, "God shall bring every work into judgment,

with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil¹." And in the Prophet Daniel also, in words like those wherewith the judgment is described in the Revelation, "Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened²." And the Prophet Joel, "The day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand: . . . The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining³." And the Prophet Malachi, "Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when HE appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire⁴."

But our Blessed Saviour reserved it to Himself to speak to us most fully and frequently and particularly of the Day of Judgment; and so much does HE do so, that it appears as if His thoughts were always most full of this one subject. In all HE says and does there seems some allusion to the Day of Judgment; and sometimes the particular mention of it; thus in the Sermon on the Mount, "I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the Judgment⁵." "Many will say unto ME in that day, LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you⁶." And again in another place, "I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment⁷." And again, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of ME and of My words; of him also shall the SON of MAN be ashamed, when HE cometh in the glory of His FATHER with the holy angels⁸." But it would be endless to mention how often our LORD speaks of the judgment; for upon consideration every thing HE says, seems at once to carry on our thoughts to that great Day.

But it was in one particular conversation with His disciples, that our LORD most fully spoke of His final Advent. It was after His last teaching in the Temple, as HE was returning home to Bethany, HE sat on the Mount of Olives, looking down upon

¹ Eccl. xii. 14.² Dan. vii. 10.³ Joel ii. 1. 10.⁴ Mal. iii. 2.⁵ Matt. v. 22.⁶ Matt. vii. 22, 23.⁷ Matt. xii. 36.⁸ Mark viii. 38.

Jerusalem and the Temple which rose beneath their feet ; and there came to HIM four of His disciples, Peter and Andrew and James and John, and asked HIM respecting His coming and the end of the world. And then our Blessed LORD described to them at great length all the circumstances of the Judgment, as we read in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of St. Matthew. He first of all, throughout the twenty-third chapter, mentions all the signs and circumstances of His coming ; of many deceivers, many falling away ; of commotions and wars ; of signs in heaven, and sun and moon being darkened, and then the SON of MAN appearing in the clouds : and in the twenty-fifth are three parables to set before us in the most forcible and striking manner a particular description of that great day of account. The first of these parables is that of the ten virgins, in which our LORD describes Himself as coming at midnight unexpectedly, and finding five out of the ten unprepared for His coming, and in consequence shut out of Heaven. The second is the parable of the talents, in which our LORD represents Himself as a Master going from home into a far country, and taking account with His servants, on His return, of the goods HE had entrusted to them. And thirdly, in words something like a parable, and yet partly like an exact description and close accurate account, our LORD adds in the same chapter, “ When the SON of MAN shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with HIM, then shall HE sit upon the throne of His glory. And before HIM shall be gathered all nations ; and HE shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats⁹. ” And then HE gives a particular description of the works of charity upon which more than any thing else that Judgment will depend—of feeding the hungry, receiving the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and those in prison.

Now the subject is far too long to enter into it at length, so very much is said of it. But if we compare together and search out all the warnings and descriptions of that great Day throughout the Scriptures, we shall find that there are some important and

⁹ Matt. xxv. 31, 32.

striking points to which the HOLY GHOST would draw our especial attention respecting it.

Of all these, perhaps the most remarkable point of all, and the one most earnestly pressed upon us, is the speediness and suddenness of its arrival; it is to this more than to any thing else that our LORD in all His descriptions directs our attention; we are told in various ways that it will not only be speedy, but also sudden. Now, its being sudden implies that it will be unexpected; that although speedy in its coming, yet that it will appear long in coming. Thus it is said, that it will come as a snare upon all those that dwell on the face of the whole earth; that it will be as a thief in the night, *i. e.* when least of all expected; as a Master returning at midnight, when His servants are sleeping, or contending with each other. "Be ye also ready," says our LORD, "for at such an hour as ye think not the SON of MAN cometh¹." And yet, though unexpected, that it will be very soon; "The hour cometh," says our LORD, "and now is, when they that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the SON of GOD²." And at last, "Behold I come quickly; surely I come quickly." And again in the Apostle's words, "The Judge standeth at the door³." Yet though so quick, to mankind it will appear long: the Master will appear to return after a long time; the Bridegroom will appear to be tarrying; the slothful servant will say in his heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming;" the mockers of these last days will say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Now, one of these prophecies we see already fulfilled, that it does appear long in coming; for so our Blessed SAVIOUR said it would appear: and the other two points also we must believe, that notwithstanding it appears to us so long, yet that in reality it will be speedy; and also will come suddenly, that is, when men expect it not.

Another remarkable point is this, that our LORD gives abundant signs of its coming; and after HE has mentioned a great many signs, then HE says, that as when the fig-tree puts forth leaves we know that summer is nigh, so also when these things come to pass, know that it (*i. e.* the Day of Judg-

¹ Luke xii. 40.

² John v. 28.

³ James v. 9.

ment) is nigh, even at the doors. And yet it appears that no observation, no learning and skill, can in any way tell its approach, but that it will overtake men suddenly and by surprise. But it seems evident from many passages of Scripture, that to faith if found upon earth, and an earnest good life which always expects the Day of Judgment, the mysterious signs of it will be known, but to none else. "But ye, brethren," says St. Paul to the Thessalonians, "are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief; ye are all the children of light." And our LORD HIMSELF speaks as if good Christians might discern it, and have hope: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh⁴."

This therefore is a great mystery: we cannot tell how it is; all we know is, that he alone, who expects it always, will find at last that he was right: all others will, somehow or other, find in the end that they were deceived.

It is, moreover, very wonderful to observe on this subject, that our LORD has given us an exact account of the men who will have to wait for that great day: HE likened the days before His second coming, to the days of Noah and the days of Lot, and to the destruction of Jerusalem; HE has described persons as living as if they did not at all expect it, although so strongly warned: they bought, they sold; they planted, they builded; they were eating and drinking; marrying and giving in marriage; *i. e.* living as men do who are not in expectation of any great change. There is, perhaps, no prophecy in Scripture more striking and remarkable than this; because it appears quite contrary to what we should have expected beforehand; that men should know and believe in the speedy approach of that great Day, and yet live as if they did not: for lo, wonderful to say, we see this prophecy being fulfilled all around us!

The next consideration which seems to pervade all the accounts of that great Day is this, that no one, from any real or fancied goodness, will escape that judgment. "God will bring every work," it is said, "into judgment." "I come quickly," says our

⁴ Luke xxi. 28.

LORD, "and My reward is with ME, to give every man according as his work shall be⁵." St. Paul speaks of himself having to undergo that judgment as well as others. "We must 'all,'" he says, "appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the LORD, we persuade men⁶." And we read in the Gospel, that when the mother of James and John asked on one occasion that her sons might sit, the one on His right, and the other on His left hand, in His kingdom, our LORD answered, "It is not mine to give," *i. e.* not to give away, from any partiality or respect of persons; "but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared⁷." So that even the beloved disciple was to have nothing promised without the same judgment of God that all must undergo. And if they, who were so very highly favoured, will not be excused from that great judgment, neither will they escape it to whom little has been given; for in the parable of the different talents, some have more and some less; but he who has only one talent lent to him, and who hid even that in the earth, and made no use of it, even he does not escape examination, as unworthy of notice, but is condemned as an unprofitable and slothful servant.

Let no one, therefore, suppose that he is so good and faithful that he shall escape that fiery trial; and let no one think that he is so mean, and knows so little, that he is of so small importance, that he shall not be thought worthy of notice in that great assembly of men and angels. Let no one think that any thing he says or does, however low his station and condition may be, will be of no consequence, that it will be neglected or forgotten in that great time of inquiry: for "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof⁸." "Pray God," says St. Peter to Simon Magus, "if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee⁹." Verily, says our LORD, a cup of cold water given for My sake, shall not lose its reward.

Another point much to be observed in our LORD's description

⁵ Rev. xxii. 12.

⁶ 2 Cor. v. 10, 11.

⁷ Mark x. 40.

⁸ Matt. xii. 36.

⁹ Acts viii. 22.

of the last day is this, that those men who will be rejected by HIM as unworthy of His kingdom, and set on the left hand, are often spoken of as being full of high assurances and self-confidence. "Not every one that saith unto ME, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My FATHER which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? . . . and then I will profess unto them, I never knew you." And, in like manner, the foolish virgins in the parable are spoken of as demanding entrance after the door has been shut: "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, LORD, LORD, open to us. But HE answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not¹." There seems to have been outwardly no difference between the foolish and the wise virgins; till there appears at last this infinite difference, which they know not of till then. In like manner, he that heareth the words of CHRIST, and doeth them, and he that heareth His words, and doeth them not, are likened to a house built on the rock, and a house built on the sand; till the floods arise, they appear outwardly alike.

And thus, also, in the parable of the talents, in St. Matthew, and in that of the pounds, in St. Luke, the unprofitable servant, in both, seems to come with much assurance: giving up the one talent which he had not improved, he says, "I went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine²." And afterwards those who are set on the left hand at last, as the goats separated from the sheep, they also came with much confidence, saying, "LORD, when saw we THEE an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto THEE³?" They are even at last like those in the Revelation, whom our LORD speaks of, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked⁴."

Whereas those who are accepted on the day of judgment are so described as if they were very like those who were accepted

¹ Matt. xxv. 11, 12.

² Ibid. xxv. 25.

³ Ibid. xxv. 44.

⁴ Rev. iii. 17.

by our LORD on earth; they who came to HIM in much lowliness, deeply impressed with the sense of their own unworthiness; in faith indeed, but much fear and trembling.

Now, I have mentioned all these circumstances to show, that although while we are in the body we can form no adequate idea or conception of that terrible inquiry and sentence, (for our notions of it are very poor at the best,) yet Holy Scripture, and especially the New Testament, does furnish us with a great deal of knowledge upon the subject; so that the most ignorant child among us knows far more than the wisest heathen.

And out of these very numerous and manifold details which Scripture gives, I have selected three points, as calling for our especial notice with regard to it.

The first is, that when we come to the mind of GOD to see things as they really are, as we shall do in the next world, then we shall perceive that its coming, although it will appear long to men in the flesh, yet is indeed exceedingly speedy and sudden. So much so, that Scripture seems to labour, if I may so speak, as if it wanted words and expressions to describe its speedy and alarming approach. And that as to the fact of men living around us as if they cared not for it, and thought not of it—this is the very thing our LORD foretold.

Secondly, that no person whatever can on any plea escape that Judgment, or pass by it without examination, be he good or bad, great or small; and that there is nothing whatever, in the conduct of the meanest and lowest among us, so insignificant or trifling that it will be passed over as unworthy of notice; that neither thought nor word will be without inquiry; no Apostle so good, no false Prophet so bad, that he shall escape,—neither St. Paul nor Simon Magus.

Thirdly and lastly, that there appears throughout the Scripture a certain temper of mind which is accepted of GOD at that Day—and the opposite to it is rejected by HIM.

The temper of heart which marks those accounted worthy of that kingdom, is that which labours very constantly and earnestly to do GOD's will at all times, and yet is always afraid that it does not do it sufficiently, which goes on with fear and trembling to the last, because it loves much; and it loves much because it feels it has much to be forgiven.

The temper of those who are set on the left hand is one which now will hide itself under a thousand disguises ; sometimes it will appear under the hardened heart and carelessness of men of the world ; sometimes full of religious zeal and party-spirit and self-assurance ;—but it may be all comprehended in a few words, it is that temper which does not tremble at God's Word.

SERMON CCXCIII.

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY GHOST.

ST. JOHN xiv. 16, 17.

“And I will pray the FATHER, and HE shall give you another COMFORTER, that HE may abide with you for ever; even the SPIRIT of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth HIM not, neither knoweth HIM: but ye know HIM; for HE dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

As the first part of the Creed is of GOD the FATHER, and the second part of GOD the SON, so the third and last part is of GOD the HOLY GHOST. And it would seem as if the Apostles' Creed were framed and given, in order fully to express the meaning of that Three-fold awful Name into which we were baptized; for, according to our LORD's command, we are all baptized “in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.” We now, therefore, come to speak of the third part of the Creed, of GOD the HOLY GHOST.

Indeed, the dispensation under which we live may be said to be especially that of the HOLY GHOST: thus it is stated in Scripture that we are baptized with the HOLY GHOST; that our LORD, *i. e.* His ministers in His Church, shall baptize with the HOLY GHOST. In the Acts of the Apostles, ministers of CHRIST are declared to be “sent forth by the HOLY GHOST:” it is said of our LORD, that before HE was taken up, HE, “through the HOLY GHOST, gave commandment unto the Apostles¹:” and when HE gave them power and authority in His Church, “HE breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the HOLY GHOST².”

¹ Acts i. 2.

² John xx. 22.

But more especially was this shown,—that the dispensation under which we live is that of the HOLY GHOST,—on the great Day of Pentecost, when the HOLY SPIRIT was sent down from Heaven, to be with us; guiding, instructing, warning, and comforting His Church until the end of the world. And, indeed, it may well be supposed that it is partly in commemoration of this great event that we keep holy the first day of the week, the LORD's Day: for on this day not only was the Light made at the Creation, and on this day our LORD, the true Light, arose from the grave; but on this day also GOD the HOLY GHOST came down from Heaven, appearing as Light in tongues of fire on Whit-Sunday; to be the Light of His Church and all its members unto the end.

In the Holy Scriptures, as in the Creed, we often find the Three Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity put together, as when our LORD gave command that we should be baptized in the Name of the Three Persons; and in the Blessing, as St. Paul expresses, “The grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST.” But then we cannot say, Abba, FATHER; we cannot come to know GOD the FATHER except by the HOLY GHOST; and no one can believe that JESUS is the CHRIST but by the HOLY GHOST. So that, without believing in GOD the HOLY GHOST, and without His help, we can neither believe in the FATHER nor in the SON.

Now our LORD, when HE was upon earth in the flesh, said to His disciples, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see;” but, from what HE says in another place, we may suppose that HE would say that still more blessed are the eyes which see the things that we see. Very blessed, most surely, must it have been to have seen our gracious LORD going about doing good, and manifesting the wonderful power of GOD amongst men. But in the 16th chapter of St. John's Gospel, we read that our LORD declared to His disciples, “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the COMFORTER will not come unto you.” It was expedient for them, it was good for them and for their advantage, to lose the gracious Presence of their Divine MASTER in the flesh; to Whom they could go on every occasion; Who bore so kindly with all their infirmities and ignorance; Who taught them with so much condescension, and

worked miracles of mercy before their eyes, in order to convince them. Yet better than all this was it to have the COMFORTER with them, whom they might see, not with their bodily eyes, yet in the spirit. As, therefore, when Elisha saw Elijah ascending up to Heaven, a double portion of the spirit of Elijah came upon him; so for those who see CHRIST after HE has ascended, whose hearts are with HIM in Heaven, for them is the HOLY SPIRIT present in His Church upon earth with a double power and blessing. How blessed, therefore, are they to whom HE is manifested: how blessed are the eyes that see HIM, and the ears that are able to hear His still and small Voice; for our LORD says expressly that HE will not be manifested to the world; for many have no eyes to see HIM and no ears to hear HIM.

But as it is the most blessed of all things to be by Baptism in the Christian Church in which the HOLY SPIRIT is, so is it of all things the most dangerous; and far more dangerous than to have rejected CHRIST when seen among men. For we read that when the Pharisees accused our LORD of working miracles by Beelzebub the prince of the devils, when HE by the SPIRIT of God cast out devils, our LORD warned them in a more awful manner than on any other occasion, as if they were on the very point of falling into a dreadful sin for which there is no forgiveness. "Whosoever speaketh a word against the SON of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the HOLY GHOST, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come³."

We are no where told exactly in Holy Scripture what this unpardonable sin against the HOLY GHOST is, but we have reason to believe that the danger is one which particularly concerns us of these latter days; and the awful uncertainty in which it is left is, no doubt, intended to make us all the more watchful and careful of any approaches to it.

Now we find that the sin against the HOLY GHOST is set against or contrasted with the sin against the SON of Man; and we may reasonably suppose that the expression of speaking against the SON of Man was meant concerning those who spoke against our LORD in the flesh; when they spoke against HIM,

³ Matt. xii. 32.

reviled and persecuted HIM as the SON of Man, not knowing that HE was also the SON of GOD. And, therefore, our LORD HIMSELF prayed for them at His death, that they might be forgiven, saying, "FATHER, forgive them; for they know not what they do⁴." They knew, indeed, that they were slaying an innocent and good man; but they knew not it was the SON of GOD: and, therefore, after our LORD's Resurrection, forgiveness of sins was preached unto them; and St. Peter himself says to them, "I wot, brethren, that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers⁵." And surely nothing could be more full of forgiveness than the SON of Man was; for His whole life was a life of forgiveness; all His actions were forgiving, and consisted in doing good to His bitter enemies. No word of threatening or punishment ever escaped from HIM; no act of retaliation for the worst things that were said or done against HIM: HE multiplied His blessings upon those who in their hearts were "clothed with cursing," as the Psalmist says of the wicked Judas: HE healed the ear of an enemy that came to take HIM, when HE might have summoned twelve legions of Angels to His assistance. Surely we see very plainly that whosoever speaketh a word against the SON of Man it shall be forgiven him.

But how very different was the case as soon as the HOLY GHOST was given. A man and his wife, Ananias and Sapphira, did not indeed openly blaspheme or speak against the HOLY GHOST, but they had unworthy thoughts of HIM, and imagined wickedly they could deceive HIM; and they found no forgiveness in this world, for they were both immediately struck dead. They died without warning or repentance⁶. How different was this from those who sinned against the SON of Man! Every thing in the Church was now done by the HOLY GHOST, rather, it may be said, than by the SON of Man. And we read again another palpable instance of what it was to sin against HIM in the 13th chapter of the Acts: "The HOLY GHOST said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. . . . So they, being sent forth by the HOLY GHOST, departed . . . But Elymas the sorcerer withstood them . . . Then Saul, being filled with the HOLY GHOST, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all

⁴ Luke xxiii. 34.⁵ Acts iii. 17.⁶ Acts v.

subtily and mischief, thou child of the devil;" and immediately struck him with blindness. And no doubt, as on the former occasion, great fear came on all the Church. And here, it may be observed, that when the Jews blasphemed and put to death the SON of Man, they were forgiven, according to His prayer; but when the HOLY GHOST was given; when HE called on them by His Ministers to repent for forty years, and they repented not, they were not forgiven in this world, for their city was destroyed.

And this also appears to have been intimated in the Old Testament. It has been shown that Elisha had a double portion of the spirit of Elijah, after Elijah had departed; but in the very same chapter in which we read of this⁷ we are told, that as he was going up by the way little children came forth out of the city and mocked him; "and he turned back and looked on them, and cursed them in the Name of the LORD. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them." Now this was a very terrible judgment for a Prophet of God to have executed, who was so full of works of mercy; and it may have occurred to us as containing some awful warning to ourselves: but we are hereby taught that Christians—those little children that enter into CHRIST's kingdom, His "little ones," as our SAVIOUR calls Christians—shall suffer in like manner if they speak evil of the HOLY GHOST. It is the disciple of love, St. John himself, who speaks to Christians under the gentle name of "little children," who says "there is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it⁸."

Now it is evident to all that there is a very fearful sin, which is called the sin against the HOLY GHOST: and surely of all people none are in such danger of this sin as we are; because it is to us baptized Christians especially that HE is given, with us HE is present; all things in the Christian Church are by the HOLY GHOST: and, therefore, as we do not know exactly what this sin is, or when its nature or amount is such as to become unpardonable, how careful ought we to be in every way to reverence and honour the HOLY GHOST, and every thing that appertains to HIM! We are often told in Scripture that all sins shall be forgiven for which men truly repent: but then true repentance

⁷ 2 Kings ii.

⁸ 1 John v. 16.

is a very difficult matter; and no one can repent truly without the HOLY GHOST; if, therefore, by a careless or unchristian life we reject the HOLY SPIRIT, if we grieve HIM and make HIM to depart from us—how can we ever repent? This consideration alone should make us very fearful of offending HIM. “It is impossible,” says St. Paul, “for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the HOLY GHOST, . . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance⁹.” Therefore it is evident that if we quench the SPIRIT, then our sins become such that we are unable to repent of them; and if we do not repent of them, then they become unpardonable. What a dreadful thing, therefore, is it for any one to treat lightly the things pertaining to the SPIRIT; for men soon become indifferent and careless about it; as Holy Scripture describes their state, they have eyes that see not, and ears that hear not, and a heart that cannot understand. There is nothing more necessary for us than to labour in all things to have a deep and unaffected reverence for the SPIRIT of God.

Now the ministers of the Church are sent forth by the HOLY SPIRIT, as it is so frequently shown throughout the Acts of the Apostles; by HIM they are commissioned to serve in the Christian Church, by HIM they declare themselves to be called to their holy function. “The HOLY GHOST,” says St. Paul, “hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which HE hath purchased with His own blood¹.” For ministers or for people to trifle in such a matter—for worldly gain or any other such wrong motive—is surely very dangerous: nor can we tell how dangerous till we see the end.

Again, the ordinances of the Church—the Sacrament of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper—are by the HOLY SPIRIT: they mean very much indeed, if they signify any thing at all. How ought we in every way to regard and reverence all things respecting them. Even things without life, when connected with the good SPIRIT, are to be treated with respect. A miracle was wrought even by the hem of CHRIST’s garment: if I may but touch His garment, said the poor woman, I shall be whole; and so she was². Even the handkerchiefs and aprons which were taken

⁹ Heb. vi. 4. 6.¹ Acts xx. 28.² Luke viii. 48.

from St. Paul's body worked miracles, because he was sent forth by the HOLY GHOST; they were made to become as it were full of His power, through the faith of those that received them³.

Surely, then, the very place,—the font of Baptism, the Altar or Holy Table,—should be treated with all reverence and regard: there was nothing in which our LORD showed His great zeal so much as in doing honour to the Church of GOD; the building in which HE was worshipped.

And if all these outward tokens of the presence of the SPIRIT are to be so carefully regarded by us, because through these things the heavenly gift is imparted and communicated to us, still more so are all the tokens of His gracious presence in our souls. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, that the HOLY GHOST was given to those that were baptized⁴; we read also of Confirmation, "They laid their hands on them, and they received the HOLY GHOST." We therefore may reasonably hope in faith, that having taken the same means, we have received the same "unspeakable gift." Who can tell what wonderful privileges and blessings he has received thereby; how all the good that we know, and think, and believe, and do, are owing to His holy inspirations within us? Who can tell how much more he might have known, how much more he might have done, if he had not by evil thoughts and evil deeds done despite unto the SPIRIT of Grace?

"HE shall lead you into all truth⁵," says our Blessed SAVIOUR: all the truth, therefore, we know which is unto life is by the HOLY SPIRIT; and the reason why we do not know more, is because we have not sought HIM more.

"HE shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you⁶," says our LORD; therefore it is not only from HIM that we know all the good we do know, but when we remember these things which CHRIST has told us in His Gospel, and they come to our mind in the time of temptation or danger, this also is from the good SPIRIT. For the things that we hear in Church will profit us but little, unless they are brought to remembrance afterwards, and continue deeply fixed in our minds.

³ Acts xix. 12.

⁴ Acts ii. 38.

⁵ John xiv. 26.

⁶ John xiv. 26.

How strongly sometimes do truths come before our minds which we may have known all our life long, but never considered ! This also is all from the good SPIRIT : “ HE shall bring to your remembrance whatever I have told you.”

“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left⁷.” Surely this warning voice, which is ever sounding in our ears, is no other than the SPIRIT of GOD : every day of our lives does it whisper to us that there is a strait and narrow way which will not admit of our going to the right or to the left ; that we might do better than we have done, or intend to do.

Again, do we complain of being faint and lukewarm in prayer, as if we cannot help it ? Is not this to doubt the power of the good SPIRIT, or by a careless life to put ourselves out of His assistance ? for it is said, “ Likewise the SPIRIT also helpeth our infirmities : for we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the SPIRIT maketh intercession for us⁸.”

But who can tell, what tongue can express, all those gifts of the SPIRIT which are spoken of in the Scripture, and of all of which we have been made partakers ? “ Ye have received the SPIRIT of adoption⁹,” says St. Paul : “ And because ye are sons, GOD hath sent forth the SPIRIT of His SON into your hearts, crying, Abba, FATHER¹.”

We therefore have received the SPIRIT ; HE has come to dwell in us at Baptism : but then His presence is known by its fruits : “ The fruit of the SPIRIT is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance².” If, therefore, we are not bringing forth these fruits, then most surely we are falling away from the SPIRIT ; and of those who do thus fall away, what do we read ? Let us remember the awful words : “ It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the HOLY GHOST, . . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.”

Very awful, then, is the dispensation under which we live ; if it be the case, as we are so often warned, that the grace of GOD

⁷ Isa. xxx. 21.

⁸ Rom. viii. 26.

⁹ Rom. viii. 15.

¹ Gal. iv. 6.

² Gal. v. 22.

may be given us in vain ; that we may fall away from grace given ; may reject the good SPIRIT in such a way that it is impossible to renew us again unto repentance ; that we may go on sinning until at last we cannot repent.

And surely every body must know, that every day that he puts off his repentance it makes it more difficult for him to repent : what is this but that the good SPIRIT goes from him ?

And every one knows that there are persons living around us in ways that must end in everlasting ruin ; and yet that it is quite in vain to think of giving them advice or warning them. Is not this an awful thought ? is it not enough to remind us of those fearful things that are said in Holy Scripture respecting the HOLY GHOST ; and those who reject HIM ?

One thing more may be mentioned. The Church of GOD from the very beginning has believed, now for 1800 years, that the HOLY GHOST is given at Baptism, and at the LORD'S Supper, and also at Confirmation ; but after a different degree and in a different manner.

This the Church has always believed to be the distinction between all the ceremonies of the Law and the ordinances and Sacraments of the Gospel ; that in all these things in the Gospel there is mysteriously carried on the dispensation of the HOLY GHOST.

We never read of the HOLY GHOST being given at Circumcision, nor by the Baptism of John ; nor by any rites of the Law ; nor do we ever read that the Priests were appointed under the Law by the HOLY GHOST : but all these things are in an especial manner set before us and declared respecting the Christian Church.

Now this has been believed by all good men in the Church from the beginning ; but some have arisen in these latter days who speak differently ; who say that the HOLY GHOST is not given at Baptism ; who say that Confirmation is of no consequence, and the like. If there are any here who have thus spoken, or have ventured to read books which speak in this manner, let me earnestly caution them to take heed ; for however confident they are in such opinions, they must allow it is possible they may be wrong ; and if they are wrong, they may be speaking against the HOLY GHOST.

Let us all guard our hearts against such thoughts. Let us all labour to be still and quiet in the Church of God; working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because the HOLY GHOST is working in us.

Let us be silent and serious whenever we think of HIM, remembering that Holy Scripture declares that our bodies are the temples of the HOLY GHOST. Let each of us for himself, commune with his own heart, and in his chamber, and be still.

“The LORD is in His Holy Temple. Let all the earth keep silence before HIM.”

SERMON CCXCIV.

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH.

1 TIMOTHY iii. 15.

“That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

THE Church of God which is here spoken of cannot mean the mere building, because that cannot in any way be said to be “the pillar and ground of the truth.” But we find in this passage St. Paul is telling Timothy the reason of his writing to him this Epistle: “These things write I unto thee, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God;” and therefore, if we look to the subjects on which St. Paul has been speaking, we shall find what he means by the Church of God. He has been giving him directions about Bishops and Deacons; and about Liturgies, of “prayers and intercessions for Kings, and all that are in authority;” and then he proceeds to speak of the great “mystery of godliness;” and from thence of the widows of the Church and the like. It is very evident, therefore, what it is St. Paul means by “the pillar and ground of the truth,” it is what is in the Apostles’ Creed called “the Holy Catholic Church:” this is “the pillar and ground of the truth.”

It is the same of which our Blessed Lord speaks, when St. Peter confessed HIM to be the SON of GOD: “And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it¹.”

¹ Matt. xvi. 18.

And in another place our LORD says, that if our brother trespass against us, we are to go and tell him his fault alone; and if he will not hear us, then to take one or two more; and then HE adds, “and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican².”

Now it is evident from this, that our LORD intends His Church to be not a mere empty name, but something we are able to go to in our difficulties and troubles: “Tell it unto the Church,” HE says; and then HE supposes the Church to be able to speak out, and tell men of their faults; “but if he neglect to hear the Church,” as if she had a voice, so as to speak with authority—and the consequences of not hearing the Church are very dreadful—“let him be unto thee as an heathen man,” as one cut off from the Church of the living God.

Of this Church, then, it is that our LORD speaks in saying to St. Peter, “Thou art Peter,” *i. e.* a rock, “and on this rock I will build My Church.” St. Paul in like manner describes it, as “built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF being the chief corner stone³,” and therefore it is called in the Nicene Creed, the “one Catholic and Apostolic Church;” being the same as the Apostles founded and established; the same in all parts of the world, with Bishops, Priests, and Deacons to govern and direct it; with Sacraments to give it life, and to support it in life; and with a Creed materially the same in every Church, from the beginning down to the present time, in all parts of the world.

Now this Church to which we must all belong, is called the Catholic Church, *i. e.* Universal, extending through all times and all countries alike, in distinction from the Church of the Jews, which was confined to one particular nation only, which had only one Temple, where all Jews were obliged to worship, and into which no Gentile was admitted. But in many respects, the Catholic Church throughout the world is like the Jewish Church, for it worships one and the same God, Who is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;” it has the Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets, and the Psalms, the same as the Jews

² Matt. xviii. 17.

³ Eph. ii. 20.

had; and it has the three Orders of Ministers, the same as the Jews had, in every place: for as among the Jews God appointed, first, the High Priest; secondly, the Priests; and thirdly, the Levites; so in the Church Catholic, in every place there is, first, the Bishop; secondly, the Priests; thirdly, the Deacons. And our Blessed LORD HIMSELF, when HE was upon earth, observed also this same order; for HE HIMSELF corresponded with the High Priest or the Bishop; and secondly, HE appointed and ordained and sent forth the Twelve Apostles; and then afterwards, HE appointed and sent forth the seventy Disciples; as we read, "After these things the LORD appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face⁴." This was the third order.

And now in all these things we may well suppose that our LORD HIMSELF instructed His Apostles how HE would have His Church governed and regulated; for we read that "HE, through the HOLY GHOST, gave commandment unto the Apostles whom HE had chosen," and that HE was for forty days speaking to them of the things concerning the kingdom of God, *i. e.* concerning the Church. And it is remarkable, that in all the early Churches throughout the world, which were founded by the Apostles themselves, things were found to be very much alike: these had all the same Creed, the same Sacraments; all were governed by Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; they had all nearly the same Bible. There were many Churches; as we read in the Revelation of the Seven Churches, the Church of Ephesus, the Church of Thyatira, and the like; *i. e.* a Church in each different place or country; but then these were all alike; each had its Bishop, its Priests, and its Deacons. So that, in one sense, they were all in a manner one; all had the same belief, doctrine, and discipline; all made up the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. They had "one LORD, one Spirit, one Faith, one Baptism⁵;" all were like parts of one Body, of which CHRIST was the Head. This is the Church, or the Catholic Church, or the Universal Church, for it is all one; and the same of which the Prayer Book speaks. Thus we say, "More especially, we pray for the good estate of the Catholic Church; that it may be guided

⁴ Luke x. 1.

⁵ Eph. iv. 5.

and governed by Thy good SPIRIT.” And in the Prayer for the Church Militant, we beseech the Divine Majesty “to inspire continually the Universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord.” And in the Litany, we pray God that it may please HIM to “rule and govern His Holy Church universal in the right way;” and afterwards, that it may please HIM “to illuminate all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.” And so likewise in the Collects of the day, we often pray for the Church; and in the Prayer for the Ember Weeks, we say, “ALMIGHTY GOD, Who hast purchased to Thyself an Universal Church by the precious blood of Thy dear SON;” and in the next, “Who of Thy Divine providence hast appointed divers Orders in Thy Church;” and in other places we pray that the Sacraments may be duly administered in the Church.

Now it is very evident, in all these places in the Prayer Book, what it is we mean when we pray for the Church, or for the Catholic Church; we mean that Church to which we belong, in which there is the Creed, the three Orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, and the Sacraments. We may, therefore, humbly hope and trust that we do belong to that Holy Catholic Church which the Apostles’ Creed speaks of, and which has been from the beginning: that that Church which our SAVIOUR purchased with His blood, and regulated through His Apostles, consisting of all people, and tongues, and nations, and languages, has come down even unto us—has come down to our own doors, even in every little parish in this “end of the world,” as our country seemed to be to the early Christians. For what had they which we have not? They had the Bible, so have we; they had the Apostles’ Creed, so have we; they had Bishops, and Priests, and Deacons, so have we. We have, indeed, most likely the same Prayers that they had, for many of our Prayers can be proved to be nearly as old as the Christian Religion, in the Churches which the Apostles founded. The sun is but one and the same for many hundred years; and yet it shines for each one of us as much as if it was shining for no one else in the world. So is the Catholic Church; it is one and the same, and yet it comes home to each as if it was only for himself alone. Have we received Holy Baptism? have we received Confirmation? have we received the Supper of the Lord, as the first Christians did?

And from whom have we received these things? From the Catholic Church. If the Church was not in this country, we should have obtained none of these. My brethren, is there nothing in this to be thankful for? Men talk in these days of the Church as if it was a subject in which they felt no great concern or interest; and yet the Church of God may be removed from any country; the light of God may be put out, and His Candlestick removed. Is it not, therefore, a great and signal mercy of ALMIGHTY GOD to this country, notwithstanding its great wickedness? Is it nothing to us that we are "fellow-citizens" with the Saints and of the Household of God, "and built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF being the chief corner stone?"

But now the Church is not only Catholic, but also it is one. "There is one Body and one SPIRIT, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one LORD, one Faith, one Baptism, one GOD and FATHER of all." And again: "by one SPIRIT are we all baptized into one Body." "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is CHRIST⁶." "That there be no schism," *i. e.* no division or separation, "in the body⁷." "Mark those that cause divisions among you, and avoid them." And our LORD's prayer for His Church is, that they "all may be one," that they may be "one in Us," "that they may be one even as We are One⁸," "that they also may be made perfect in one." "Jerusalem is built as a city, that is at unity in itself⁹." The sacred canon is, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." And therefore from these very words of our LORD, we may be sure that the Church in this country is very weak and feeble, on account of its manifold divisions; that God is on the point of removing it, unless we repent; for these are a sure sign, by which we know that He is departing from us. The Church is like our SAVIOUR's robe, woven without seam from the top throughout, which cannot be divided, or else it is good for nothing. It is His own Body of which it was said, "not a bone of it shall be broken."

⁶ 1 Cor. xii. 12.

⁷ 1 Cor. xii. 25.

⁸ John xvii. 22.

⁹ Ps. cxxii. 3.

In the next place, the Church must not only be one and Catholic, but must also be Holy, it is the Holy Catholic Church. Now this does not mean that all its ministers will be holy men, although they ought to be. For we find that the Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses' seat, were very unholy men: and Judas Iscariot, one of the Apostles chosen by our LORD HIMSELF, was the most wicked of men. Nor does it mean that all its members will be holy, although they ought to be: for our LORD speaks of His Church as being like a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; "which, when it was full, they drew to the shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away¹:" or, being like a field, in which the Son of Man sows good seed, but the enemy sows tares, and they are both allowed to grow together unto the harvest. And in another place, HE speaks of His Church under the parable of the vine, in which some are living branches, some are dead branches, which partake not of the sap of the vine. From these things it appears, that when the Church is called holy, it does not mean that all persons belonging to it will be what they ought to be in this world. But still it is in many senses holy: the Head of the Church, Who is in Heaven, is holy; and therefore the whole Body, which is on earth, partakes of His holiness. And it is holy, because the HOLY SPIRIT dwells within it; and because, although its members are not all holy, yet they have all been once made holy at Baptism, being made children of God; and therefore it is said, "They shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD²." It shall be called "the city of Righteousness;" "the mountain of holiness." It is moreover holy, because all things dedicated to God are holy: therefore its Sacraments are holy; its houses of prayer are holy; and its ministers are in some sense holy, because they serve before the LORD; and the bodies of all Christians are holy, because they are temples of the HOLY GHOST.

And it is moreover holy, because CHRIST will again come, and drive out of His Church all things that offend, and those that do iniquity, at the last Day, with the rod of eternal destruction: "that HE might present it to HIMSELF a glorious Church, not

¹ Matt. xiii. 48.

² Is. lxii. 12.

having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish³."

And as all the members of the Church below are once made holy at Baptism ; so all those who are to be members of the heavenly Jerusalem shall be made holy on the Day of Judgment : and of this more particularly St. John speaks, when he says, "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband⁴."

Then shall the elect of God be made holy, never again to fall away, with no possibility of sinning any more ; then shall they be united to God and to CHRIST without any fear of divisions, for all is there blessed harmony, and love, and peace. Then will it be truly one ; then also will it be truly Catholic ; for in it will be gathered the Saints of God of all ages and times, from the beginning to the end ; from every nation and clime ; when many shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, "and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven." For the Church of the Jews will then be lost in the Church Universal, which gathers of every age and nation. "I beheld," says the Evangelical Prophet, "and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands⁵."

Surely we cannot hope to be of that blessed number in Heaven unless we labour to be of the same here on earth ; unless we strive to be of the Holy Catholic Church on earth ; do all we can to keep to that doctrine which CHRIST and His Apostles have appointed ; and earnestly contend for that faith which was once for all delivered unto the Saints ; unless we do all we can to promote harmony, and love, and peace on earth, as it is in Heaven. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem ; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls." "For my brethren and companions' sake, I will wish thee prosperity." This must be the wish of every good man ; the peace of the Church of God must be the thing most dear to his heart ; this must be a prayer that he must be most glad to make, not for his own sake only,

³ Eph. v. 27.

⁴ Rev. xxi. 2.

⁵ Rev. vii. 9.

but for the sake of his brethren in CHRIST, and his companions on this short journey to the heavenly Sion. The peace and prosperity of the Church, this must be all in all to him; this will he promote in every way: and how can he better promote it than by his prayers? "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." And how can he pray acceptably, but by being holy? The "prayer of a righteous man availeth much." What is the reason of the numberless religious divisions into which this country is torn? Doubtless, it is from the want of holiness,—from the want of holiness, in the first place, in the ministers of the Church generally for these hundred and fifty years, from their being so mixed up with this world, and worldly business, and worldly politics; and from thence from a want of holiness in all its members. For these reasons, no doubt, God has suffered all these divisions to prevail, not in our own Church only, but in the Church Catholic throughout the whole world. And in no way can unity be restored, except by people becoming better, living more self-denying, humble, charitable lives. It is to unity, to union, to unanimity, that God has promised His blessing; for HE is a God of unity: and HE will not grant this unity unless men live holier lives than they do. It is HE that "maketh men to be of one mind in an house;" it is HE only that can heal our innumerable strifes and dissensions, and bind up the wounds of His Church. To HIM must we look for it; we must wait on HIM, and watch for HIM, that His Church may be all one as it was of old; and that HE may come and dwell among us, and that we may again be one fold under one SHEPHERD.

There are, indeed, many who care not at all for these things; and if you speak of the unity, and peace, and harmony of the Church, you may as well speak to them of the peace and harmony of Heaven itself. They care not at all about it. Their hearts are too much taken up with this world.

Nevertheless, "they shall prosper that love thee." "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." They who on earth long to see the Church at unity in itself; who labour and pray for this object: if God cannot grant them to see this on earth, on account of our manifold sins and disorders, yet their own souls shall be made fit for the peace and order of the blessed angels that are in Heaven.

Now many good people are alarmed at the manifold divisions which abound; they say, Can this be the true Church of God, which is torn asunder into so many parties and sects, and broken to pieces? For it is evident throughout the Scriptures, that the Church of God must be one; and how can we be safe unless we belong to the one true Church?

It is a reason, indeed, why we should be humbled to the dust before God. They who were without the covenant of promise in the Gospels received admission into all its benefits, when they were humbled at the sense of their condition. The woman of Canaan, who confessed she was not one of God's children, and considered herself to be but even as the dogs, that "eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table;" the heathen centurion, who said that he was not worthy that CHRIST should enter under his roof because he was a Gentile: these were very high in God's favour, because they were humbled at the want of those privileges which others had, and thereby brought more to a sense of their unworthiness and uncleanness.

Now it is very certain that no blessing can ever go with divisions and dissensions; but if we labour for peace and unity, to "keep the unity of the SPIRIT in the bond of peace," we shall have the blessing of God's children. HE will not lay to our charge the divisions and dissensions which we have not occasioned and cannot help; HE will keep us secretly in His tabernacle from the strife of tongues, and fill our hearts with that peace which passeth all understanding.

SERMON CCXCV.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

EPHESIANS iv. 3—6.

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the SPIRIT in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one SPIRIT, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one LORD, one faith, one baptism, one GOD and FATHER of all.”

MEN are always endeavouring to join and associate together, and in some way to have fellowship with each other. It is something to belong to the same country and the same parish among strangers, and often by little clubs and societies, for some mutual profit or pleasure, men combine together and entertain something of good-will towards each other. Still more so when born of the same parents, bred up in the same house, brethren and sisters, and relations more or less near. Or, again, if men can agree together, in politics, or any other subject in which they are strongly interested, this also binds them together. And thus in numberless other ways mankind are always disposed to join hand in hand and heart with heart among each other. And, surely, no wonder; for of all things in this world, love and mutual affection is the most of all things worth living for: of all worldly comforts it is by far the greatest: “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith¹.” Love in a family, love among friends, love in a neighbourhood, there is nothing equal to this: in some way or other men will always endeavour to be joined together with others, even though it be to do evil. But,

¹ Prov. xv. 17.

now, all this which we see throughout the world is but a sign of something infinitely greater and better, that which is called in the Creed the Communion of Saints; that mysterious and unspeakable union and love by which Christians are to be bound together with each other and with God.

If brethren upon earth feel in a manner one, and have love for each other because they have the same earthly parents; how much more they who as Christians have one FATHER which is God, and one Spiritual Mother which is the Church of God? If children of the same womb and nursed at the same breast have any brotherly love for each other; how much more they who have one Baptism by which they are made children of God? If they who are of the same country upon earth, or the same profession, are in a manner joined together as fellow-countrymen, fellow-soldiers, fellow-travellers, fellow-labourers, fellow-servants; how much more they who are travelling together to the same heavenly country, having one MASTER and SAVIOUR; being made "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God?" If men are friends with each other because they agree in worldly politics; how much more when they agree in holding the one faith, once delivered to the Saints; when they love and value, and are deeply concerned for, the same great doctrines and truths of God? Those are all of earth, this is of heaven; those are party spirit, this is Divine charity.

But the Communion of Saints is something infinitely more excellent than any thing that can be thus explained; for Christians being grafted by Baptism into the Body of CHRIST, are made like parts of each other. "As the body is one," says St. Paul, "and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is CHRIST. For by one SPIRIT are we all baptized into one body²." And as the limbs of the same body feel for each other, so, says the Apostle, is it with Christians. "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." CHRIST is in all, CHRIST is in each, and therefore all feel for each other. We are, as the same Apostle says, "members one of another³." And this mysterious union arises not

² 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

³ Rom. xii. 5.

only from our partaking of one Baptism, but also from the other Sacrament. "We being many," says the Apostle, "are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread ⁴."

And this love which Christians are to feel for each other, is to be something perfectly different in kind from those combinations and fellowships which are in the world; and so great and true, that mankind will see it to be, not of an earthly, but of an heavenly nature, and will discern in it something Divine. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another ⁵." Thus our LORD speaks of His peace as a gift quite different from that which is found in the world: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you." And before offering up the great Sacrifice of HIMSELF, our LORD prays for this union among His disciples of a nature so unspeakable, so unlike any thing that is in the world, as to be a resemblance of that unity whereby our LORD is One with the FATHER. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on ME through their word; that they all may be one; as THOU, FATHER, art in ME, and I in THEE, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that THOU hast sent ME." And again, "I have declared unto them Thy Name, . . . that the love wherewith THOU hast loved ME may be in them, and I in them ⁶." Now this we may see is the Communion of Saints; and it is spoken of as something so Divine, in the love of Christians to each other even upon earth, as to be like a miracle in the world.

And when the HOLY SPIRIT came down on the day of Pentecost, there was a remarkable sign of this union in the eyes of all men. For we read in Genesis, that when men endeavoured to build a tower to heaven, the curse of Babel came upon the world; God came down to confound their language, so that they could no longer understand one another's speech, and "scattered them abroad upon the face of all the earth," so that the people should be no longer one, of one language ⁷. For if they continued one, they would be able, as it were, to build a tower to heaven. But on

⁴ 1 Cor. x. 17.

⁶ John xvii. 21, 22. 26.

⁵ John xiii. 35.

⁷ Gen. xi. 6. 9.

Whit-Sunday, the first day in some sense of the Christian Church, this curse was removed, when the HOLY SPIRIT came down and gave the Apostles power to speak all languages of the world: then was it shown that however scattered abroad and divided by different languages, and in different countries throughout the whole world, yet that Christians should be one, one people; should have, as it were, one language, and understand each other. That as the Jewish nation had been all one, separate from other nations, of one heart, one language, one family; so should the Christian Church be throughout the world, all united together in the Communion of Saints⁸.

And although we see it is now very different, yet it once was thus united; for we read in the Acts of the Apostles of the early Church, that it had this mark of CHRIST: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common⁹." And no wonder that they should have been all one, for we read also of them, "That they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came on every soul¹."

And as this love and union was to be the sure sign of true Christians, whereby it should be known to all men that they were disciples of Christ; so are we told that the want of this union and concord was a no less certain indication that they had fallen from the faith. "Now I beseech you, brethren," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "by the Name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, . . . that there are contentions among you²." "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal. . . . For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" Here St. Paul declares that the very existence of divisions among them was a sure sign that they were not walking in the SPIRIT; and

⁸ Acts ii. 6. 12.

¹ Acts ii. 42, 43.

⁹ Acts iv. 32.

² 1 Cor. i. 10, 11.

St. John also tells us, that this union, this Communion of Saints, was the sure fruit of our walking in the SPIRIT; and the sign to us that we are indeed cleansed from our sins in CHRIST's blood. "If we walk in the light, as HE is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of JESUS CHRIST His SON cleanseth us from all sin." If we walk in this light, then shall we certainly have the Communion of Saints, and if we have the Communion of Saints, then are we of that one body which is washed from sin in the blood of CHRIST.

Every Christian, therefore, so far as he is a Christian, must yearn and long after, must earnestly desire to promote this Communion of Saints; for so far as the love of GOD is shed abroad in the heart, it will bear this blessed fruit. "Beloved, let us love one another," says St. John: "for love is of GOD; and every one that loveth is born of GOD, and knoweth GOD. He that loveth not knoweth not GOD; for GOD is love."

First of all, therefore, we must endeavour to communicate together in Apostolical doctrine and spiritual evangelical worship; for there is one Baptism, says St. Paul, and one Bread, and one Body. And this is the pattern set before us in the true and first Church, that it "continued stedfast in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship;" that they were "of one heart and of one soul." "I beseech you, brethren," says the Apostle, "by the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment³." And again, "The GOD of all patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to CHRIST JESUS: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify GOD, even the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST⁴." And to the Philippians, "If there be any consolation in CHRIST, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the SPIRIT, if any bowels of mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord and one mind." Again to the Hebrews, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; . . . not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye

³ 1 Cor. i. 10.

⁴ Rom. xv. 5, 6.

see the day approaching⁵." No Christian can acceptably serve God by standing alone, and by himself, and worshipping apart from others. For the especial blessing is where two or three are gathered together in the Name of CHRIST, there is HE in the midst of them. It is one SPIRIT by which we worship; it is one Gospel according to which we worship; it is one faith with which we worship; and therefore one worship: "If two shall agree on earth concerning any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My FATHER which is in heaven⁶."

But it is not only in religious ordinances that we are to further this blessed union, "endeavouring to keep the unity of the SPIRIT in the bond of peace." What is more strongly and more frequently enjoined us throughout the Scriptures than the love of our neighbour—love after the pattern of CHRIST, Who laid down His life for us, that we also may be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren? This surely is no ordinary love: it is not like any thing in this world; for it is that Divine love which is to bind together the Communion of Saints. We cannot be too often reminded that it was Cain, that wicked one who slew his brother, that first said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Every Christian is his brother's keeper; for none of us are to live to ourselves, and none of us to die to ourselves⁷. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others⁸." "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of CHRIST⁹." If any member in that Communion of Saints suffer in mind, body, or estate, every other true member of the same must suffer with it.

Why is so much said in Holy Scripture of the forgiveness of injuries, so that even our prayers become an abomination in the sight of God, unless we from our hearts forgive every one his brother their trespasses? The reason is, because, without entire and full forgiveness of all injuries, there can be no peace and concord in the Communion of Saints. He who forgives not his brother, stands apart from the Communion of Saints; and if he is not in the Communion of Saints, his prayers are not heard of God. He is not of that one SPIRIT and one Body.

⁵ Heb. x. 23. 25.

⁶ Matt. xviii. 19.

⁷ Rom. xiv.

⁸ Phil. ii. 4.

⁹ Gal. vi. 2.

Why is so very much said in Holy Scripture of giving alms, of visiting the poor and afflicted, of bearing their burdens, of distributing to the necessities of Saints, of being given to hospitality, so much so that this is mentioned as the great thing upon which our salvation will depend upon the last Day? It is because Christians are so united with CHRIST and with each other in the Communion of Saints. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto ME." "Whoso seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" How many sayings of our Blessed LORD, and how many of His parables, are there given in order to set before us this subject! The parable of the good Samaritan, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the parable of the two debtors. This was the reason why salvation was come to the house of Zaccheus, because the half of his goods he gave to the poor. This was the one thing needful which our LORD set forth to the rich young man, "Sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow ME."

All things are connected with that great doctrine, that mystery, which as yet we know and understand not—the Communion of Saints; and, therefore, in that first and true Church, on the day of Pentecost, when they continued in the Apostles' doctrine, and were of one heart and of one mind, they sold their possessions, and gave to the poor, and had all things in common.

Now this Communion of Saints must already in some degree take place on earth: a good man must love good men; must love GOD, and CHRIST, and His Church, and all things and all persons belonging to it: for he that loves the FATHER, must love also, says St. John, those that are begotten of HIM. And he will love all men, because if they do not belong to the Church and household of GOD, yet they may do so: the ways of GOD are unsearchable; he will have hope even of the worst, and, after the example of CHRIST, will love even those that are lost in trespasses and sins, as we all were when GOD had mercy on us. Praying for each other; edifying each other; sustaining each other; forgiving each other: these are the duties of this article of our faith.

But this Communion of Saints is not confined to those alone who are on earth; for there is a Communion also between those

that are on earth and those that are departed and are with CHRIST. Thus St. Paul, speaking of the privileges of Christians, says that they are come to some mysterious union with the spirits of just men made perfect: "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect¹."

There is a Communion between good men and Angels; for even the Angels are sent to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation². They feel an exceeding interest respecting us, and rejoice over one sinner that repenteth.

Much more may we suppose that the spirits of just men made perfect, which are now with God, must feel united to us, and pray to God for us, as seems intimated in the Revelation³. For if GOD HIMSELF is joined in Communion with His Saints that are on earth, if CHRIST and His HOLY SPIRIT are ever interceding for them, the Angels and Saints that are with CHRIST, no doubt are united to us and to each other in some wonderful union, and fellowship, and love, beyond what our faculties now can conceive. No doubt that love of each other is one of those things which hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive, which God hath laid up for them that wait for Him.

Now we may observe, that when our Blessed Lord spoke to the Jews of the blessedness of heaven hereafter, He spoke of sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; of being carried by Angels into Abraham's bosom. Thus did He describe to them the Communion of Saints, and their fellowship with their fathers after death. But how shall these things be described to the Christian?

To be admitted not only to be with Abraham, but to be admitted to be with CHRIST and His Apostles, and good men of every age and country; to be with the beloved Disciple who leaned on his Master's breast; with St. Peter and St. Paul; to be with the glorious company of the Apostles, with the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, with the noble army of Martyrs, with

¹ Heb. xii. 22, 23.

² Heb. i. 14.

³ Rev. v. 8.

all those Saints whom St. Paul records in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews ; who walked by faith, looking for a city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. For all these wait for us, says the Apostle, till the Communion of Saints be made perfect : “ these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

And far more than these, recorded by St. Paul, are those Christian Saints that since have lived, such as St. John speaks of in the Revelation :—“ I saw under the altar the souls of those that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held ⁴.” And again of others :—“ They sung as it were a new song, and no one could learn that song but ” those “ which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women ; for they are virgins : ” “ which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth,” “ redeemed from among men, the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb ⁵.” And again :—“ He said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple : and He that sitteth on the Throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ⁶.

Now, if we believe in the Communion of Saints, we believe that, with all these spirits of just men made perfect, we are united in some wonderful manner ; that they watch over us with great interest while we are in the body, and welcome us when we depart from it with great joy, if we have overcome and triumphed like themselves in our contest with the enemies of our salvation. We are one with them in CHRIST ; all members of that one Body.

It is, indeed, the case that this article of the Creed, like some

⁴ Rev. vi. 9.

⁵ Rev. xiv. 3, 4.

⁶ Rev. vii. 14—17.

others, has been very much forgotten; and no article of the Creed can be forgotten without evil consequences in many ways. Hence it is that there is so little unity and love among Christians: hence have arisen such numberless disputes and divisions; and hence also that very low standard of Christian holiness which has prevailed. For if we truly and practically believed in the Communion of Saints,—that we are of one spirit and of one body with those Saints of old,—how could we ever bear to live in a manner so contrary to what they did? How could we think lightly of them and despise them? Bishops, and Clergy, and people, now are so unlike those of old times, that one could hardly suppose it was the same religion they professed. Then they gave up all for religion; now all orders of men labour to gain and keep all they can: then they fasted much, and laboured much, and prayed much, and after all they did not venture to think that they had attained; now men neither fast, nor labour, nor pray, and yet think themselves secure of salvation: then they rose at midnight, to pray and sing praises to God; now few indeed, it is to be feared, if any, rise early to pray: then they sold all that they had to give to God's Church and poor; now even the tithe which the Jew gave is thought an intolerable burden: then religious men thought seven times a day was not too often to meet together in prayer; now many people think once in seven days enough: then they thought it right and good to communicate every day in CHRIST'S Body and Blood; now it is much otherwise. How, therefore, can we expect in the end to be united with them? No wonder, then, men should pass over an article of the Creed which would teach them things so much higher than they are willing to learn. They receiving the Word in an honest and good heart brought forth fruit; some thirty, some sixty, some an hundredfold: we think it a great matter to receive the Word at all, though we bring forth no fruit.

Such is the Communion of the Saints; the Communion of God with His Saints; the Communion of Christians, now alive, with those that are gone; the Communion of all Christians with each other, in doctrine and worship, in love and all good works. The more intimate our Communion is with God, the more shall we be knit together in the Communion of Saints.

S E R M O N C C X C V I .

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

LUKE iv. 18, 19.

“The SPIRIT of the LORD is upon ME, because HE hath anointed ME to preach the Gospel to the poor; HE hath sent ME to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the LORD.”

THESE words from the Prophet Isaiah were spoken by our Blessed SAVIOUR respecting HIMSELF on the first day of His preaching at His own city, Nazareth: implying thereby, that the great year of release, the jubilee, or fiftieth year, and the deliverance of captives which was then required of the Jews¹, was truly fulfilled in CHRIST, when HE came forth to preach remission of sins by His Gospel. And all things connected with the Gospel seem to speak of the remission of sins; all the Prophets that described its character, and all the figures and types going before, all the sacrifices and washings of the Law, declared something of this kind,—that “we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve HIM without fear.” The preaching of John the Baptist, when he came to prepare the way, was of “repentance for the remission of sins,” “to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins².”

But more fully did this great doctrine come forth when our Blessed SAVIOUR HIMSELF went about preaching the Gospel; indeed, this very word Gospel or good tidings implies this, for

¹ Lev. xxv. 3.

² Luke i. 74, 77.

what were those good tidings which HE came to proclaim, unless there was remission of sins? For there could be no good tidings to the sinful children of men from GOD without remission of sins: unless our guilt is somehow removed, nothing can be good to us. And as our LORD sent forth to baptize at the same time with the preaching of His kingdom, this Baptism also intimated remission of sins; for what else did such washing signify but the washing away of sins? Add to this, that our Blessed LORD HIMSELF always connected the healing of bodily diseases with the preaching of His Gospel; and when HE sent forth His disciples, HE put these two together—to preach the Gospel and to heal the sick. Now all those bodily maladies which HE removed were only certain outward signs of the forgiveness of sins: for all bodily diseases are the tokens of GOD's displeasure against sin: to remove the outward sign of sin by His Word, was to show that HE had power also to remove the sin itself; that HE was both able and willing to do so. And in order to show this more forcibly and distinctly, we read that on one occasion, when HE was asked to heal a man that had the palsy, our LORD in healing him did not at all allude to the bodily malady, but only to the cause of such affliction, saying, "Son, be of good cheer: thy sins be forgiven thee." And when the Scribes murmured in themselves at His thus speaking, HE explained to them the reason of His so doing; "that ye may know that the SON of MAN hath power on earth to forgive sins³."

But in fact it needs no argument to prove that CHRIST did by His death purchase for us forgiveness of sins; and indeed the Gospel itself of good tidings cannot be better described than by these words of St. Paul, that "GOD hath reconciled us to HIMSELF by JESUS CHRIST, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that GOD was in CHRIST, reconciling the world unto HIMSELF, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation⁴."

The question, therefore, is, how are we sinful creatures to obtain this forgiveness of sins which is in CHRIST? It is the most important and concerning question that can be asked in the world; the one on which it most of all concerns us not to be

³ Matt. ix. 6.

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

mistaken : in considering which we ought to set all passions and prejudices aside, that we may find out what the truth is.

Now the place which this article occupies in the Creed, seems to indicate that it is in the Church of God that this forgiveness of sins is. "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the Forgiveness of sins." It is thus described by the Prophet, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness⁵;" *i. e.* for the true Church of God, which was prefigured of old by the house of David and Jerusalem : to them who are in the Church of God is there a fountain open.

But in what way in the Church is remission of sins to be obtained? First of all, and mainly of course in Baptism; and therefore in the Nicene Creed, this article is more unfolded and explained : "I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins." And this we know is very often set forth in Holy Scripture; as St. Peter first preached, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of JESUS CHRIST, for the remission of sins⁶." Thus was it said to St. Paul, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins⁷." And that there is something of forgiveness likewise in the other Sacrament to the true penitent, is evident from our LORD's own words in appointing it, "This is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." We may trust, therefore, that at the LORD's Supper also, upon true repentance, there is not only joy, and strength, and peace; as the Catechism says, "the strengthening and refreshing of our souls;" but something also of remission of sins; although this latter is not much mentioned in Scripture. But the one great fountain of cleansing sin is Baptism.

There is moreover another mode in which there is remission of sin laid up in the Church through the ministers of CHRIST; for this, likewise, CHRIST gave them some peculiar and especial gift of the HOLY GHOST: thus when HE gave commission to His Apostles after HE rose from the dead, it was with these remarkable words, "As My FATHER hath sent ME, even so send I you. And when HE had said this, HE breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the HOLY GHOST. Whosoever sins ye

⁵ Zech. xlii. 1.

⁶ Acts ii. 38.

⁷ Acts xxii. 16.

remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained⁸." For this peculiar gift for their ministry was before the day of Pentecost, when they were to wait to be endued with power from on high, and something pertaining to that office. And this power given to God's ministers, whatever it may be, is still preserved in the Church, as you may find it in the Prayer-book; for when the minister receives his commission from the Bishop at the Ordination, it is with these words;—the Bishop says, "Receive the HOLY GHOST for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands." "Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained." Now surely it would be wicked and blasphemous for the Church to use these words if nothing was meant by it, or if she had no right to use them. And in the Prayer-book we find on three different occasions, that the Priest, in virtue of his office, does publicly pronounce this absolution. First of all at Morning and Evening Prayer, after the general Confession, there follows "the Absolution or Remission of sins, to be pronounced by the Priest alone, standing: the people still kneeling." In which he says, "ALMIGHTY GOD, Who hath given power and commandment to His ministers, to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins." And in like manner at the Holy Communion, there is a general Confession of sins, and then is the Priest or Bishop directed to stand up, and turning himself to the people, to pronounce Absolution in the form there given. The other instance is in the Visitation of the Sick, where we read, "Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which confession, the Priest shall absolve him if he humbly and heartily desire it, after this sort:" "OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in HIM, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences; and by His authority committed unto me, I absolve thee." And it may be remembered, that in the exhortation to the Holy Communion it is said, that if any one cannot quiet his own conscience he is to

⁸ John xx. 21—23.

come to the "minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's Holy Word, he may receive the benefit of Absolution."

And this Absolution is commonly called the Power of the Keys, in allusion to the words which CHRIST used when HE gave the power to His first appointed ministers, the Apostles, St. Peter and the rest. "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven." Which our Blessed LORD also repeats on another occasion more generally to them all; and both times when speaking of the Church; that there shall be in it a power of binding and loosing, of retaining and remitting sins⁹.

But it must be remembered, that the one great fountain for the forgiveness of sins is Holy Baptism; we do not know of any other way upon earth in which sins are fully forgiven but at Baptism; when we are made anew; redeemed from all sin; made children of GOD, and members of CHRIST. The next time after this when sins are fully removed is on the day of Judgment. "Repent ye therefore," says St. Peter, "and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the LORD; and HE shall send JESUS CHRIST, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things¹."

Baptism, therefore, is the one cleansing of all sin when we enter upon the Christian state here upon earth; and is a sign or figure of that washing away of all sin when we shall be brought into the new Christian state at the day of Judgment; that great regeneration when all things shall be made new at the times of refreshing and the presence of the LORD.

It is, therefore, to the great day of Judgment that we are to look for the full remission of sins upon our true repentance: "Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." It is for true repentance before that time that we are to labour, for it is on true repentance only that our sins will then be forgiven. And nothing is more difficult than true repentance: innocency of life and purity of heart, and a conscience void of offence, are

⁹ Matt. xvi. 19, and xviii. 18.

¹ Acts iii. 19—21.

very rare and uncommon things in this world; but they are not so rare and uncommon as true repentance. It is more easy to keep entirely free from sin than to repent truly after committing sin. For every known sin hardens the heart and darkens the conscience, so that after sin committed a person is not so alive to the sense of sin as he was before. A good man who is very careful to keep himself from sin, thinks notwithstanding that he has much need of repentance, on account of his daily falling short of those things which he would wish to do; and is therefore daily repenting and endeavouring to do better than he did before. But in the careless life that most men lead, they think they have little need of repentance at all, they do not know what repentance is; and many even after deadly sin, such as fornication and dishonesty, think they have repented quite sufficiently, when the occasions for those sins are passed by, and therefore they are not committing them again at present: but, surely, this is not such repentance as will stand them in any stead on the day of Judgment before the heart-searching God. For in all such cases there is need of a thorough conversion of heart, so as to loathe and hate the very remembrance of those sins which led to their fall: and to abstain very carefully from all that partakes of the same character in thought, word, and deed.

The one great object, therefore, which we have to do in this world, is to make our repentance sure before the next Coming of CHRIST. His first Coming was for salvation, and therefore HE has left in His Church all things necessary to obtain remission of sins against that awful time of His second Coming. Our repentance must be sincere, hearty, entire, throughout the whole man, the whole life, the whole heart. For this reason, beside the one great washing of Baptism, we need many daily washings; we need every assistance we can possibly procure by any means to obtain remission of sins. On one occasion, when our LORD healed the lepers, HE did it not at once by His Word, but *sent* them to the Priests in Jerusalem according to the Law; and as they went they were cleansed. On another occasion HE *sent* a man to wash in the pool of Siloam, which is, being interpreted, Sent; and thus His cure was perfected. In like manner, in the Old Testament, the heathen Naaman was *sent* to wash in the sacred river Jordan in the Holy Land. No other washing but this

would have removed his leprosy. We are no doubt taught by these things, that we must not be wilful in the matter of repentance; but must take all those means which God has provided in His Church to restore us.

Even in this life there is a comfort and peace in religious duties, whereby God is pleased to show us in His great mercy, that in such ways there is something of the Remission of Sins. The penitent and afflicted soul will often find in the Holy Sacrament of our LORD'S Body and Blood, something of that peace which passeth all understanding, which seems to be like a ray of light come from that place where there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

So also in their degree in the Prayers and Absolution of the Church. There are many, very many, who fly to things of this world for refuge, to society, or business, or pleasure; to any thing which will take up their thoughts, in order to flee from a sense of their sins; to endeavour to forget them, although it be by increasing them: but for some this will not do. They feel they have an intolerable burden, and nothing they fear so much as that they should forget this burden; and all they desire is to obtain not forgetfulness of their sins, but remission and forgiveness. To such, the Offices and Prayers of the Church are an unspeakable comfort; they read, they hope, they believe that CHRIST has therein laid up for them a store of consolation: others may mock or disregard, but they are dying for want of healing; they believe and trust, that, as Naaman the Syrian, as the ten lepers sent to the Priest, as the blind man sent to the pool of Siloam, as the poor woman who touched the hem of CHRIST'S garment; as these were all healed when they used poor earthly means, but in faith and obedience to CHRIST: so they come to the ordinances which CHRIST has appointed, and therein are comforted. They believe that CHRIST HIMSELF is there, saying, "Come unto ME, all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." They believe, and according to their faith is it done unto them.

And the more they feel themselves heavy laden, the more do they have recourse to these remedies, and find peace in them. As many very holy and wise men have on their death-beds asked for Absolution from the Church, and therein have found comfort, on confessing their sins.

We have nothing else to do in this world, than to labour daily after all those means and ways whereby God has given us to hope that we may find in some measure remission of sins. We cannot indeed obtain full remission of guilt, we cannot know that we are entirely pardoned for past sins, especially for those of a deadly nature, before the great Day of account. But blessed be God, there are many ways in which we may obtain more and more a hope of forgiveness; such a hope as is infinitely better than any satisfaction which this world can afford us,—“an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil².” Thus full confession and conversion, the more frequently they are renewed, the more will they afford us substantial grounds for such hope: for whoso confesseth his sins shall find mercy; “Repent and be converted, that thy sins may be blotted out.” Even in common language, confession is said to make the breast clean. Confession opens the breast to the eye of God, which was before closed against Him.

Again, full forgiveness for all the sins done to us will go far to obtain forgiveness of our sins from God. Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven; this is the promise. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others, is the prayer we are commanded to make by Him Who knows that such a prayer will be granted.

Again: charity to the bodies and the souls of our brethren, will avail much; charity to their souls; for we are told, “he which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” And charity for their bodies also; for of almsgiving our Lord says, “Give alms of such things as ye have, and behold all things are clean unto you.” And, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy:” mercy, *i. e.* for their sins in the time of their great need. Of such it is said, that God will “make all his bed in his sickness³.”

This, then, is the appointed time when all must be done that can ever be done to obtain Remission of sins, and therefore it is called the Day of Salvation: the fountain of cleansing for the house of Judah is yet open—is not yet closed: but it is an awful thought, that if we sin wilfully after we come to the knowledge of the truth, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, there remaineth

² Heb. vi. 19.

³ Ps. xli. 1. 3.

no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment.

But those who would look to CHRIST as their SAVIOUR, will labour, not to add to their sins, but to obtain remission for them in this short time allotted to repentance ; as they have once for all obtained remission in Baptism, so will they endeavour to make that calling and election sure.

Let us pause on these words : " Now once in the end of the world hath HE appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of HIMSELF. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment : so CHRIST was once offered to bear the sins of many : and unto them that look for HIM shall HE appear the second time without sin unto salvation ⁴."

⁴ Heb. ix. 27, 28.

SERMON CCXCVII.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

1 COR. xv. 52, 53.

“The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

AMONG all nations of the world men have believed that the soul of man lives when it departs from the body; but that the body itself shall arise from the dust, and again be joined to the soul, was never at all known or believed in the world until it was revealed by JESUS CHRIST.

And, therefore, the heathen poets used to complain in a feeling manner at the lot of man being worse than that of the flowers of the field, and such things as we see around us; for, said they, when the spring returns, these objects in nature, which appear dead, will rise up and flourish again from the ground; but man decays, and falls to dust, and never rises again.

But now we Christians can see things very different; for we know that all nature around us is made to speak to us of the Resurrection of our own bodies from the grave. The trees drop their leaves, and are to all outward appearance as if dead; but when the spring returns they shoot out again in leaves and fruits: flowers, in like manner, seem to die away; but the seed they drop in the earth, after disappearing for a while, so that no one could find them, spring up again. And many worms and caterpillars seem to die away and be lost, when suddenly they are

changed into beautiful insects with wings, and fly abroad as bright butterflies. All these things, and such as these out of number, are no doubt intended to remind us of that great Article of the Creed, the Resurrection of the flesh.

Now this doctrine was never thought of by the heathen; so that when St. Paul preached at Athens, the seat of Gentile learning, they listened to him until he came to speak of the Resurrection of the dead: but when they heard of this, some, it is said, mocked; others said, We will hear thee again of this matter¹. And the reason why this was never known to any but Christians seems to be this, that the Resurrection of our bodies arises altogether from this fact, that CHRIST took upon HIM our flesh, and was raised again from the dead. "If there be no Resurrection of the dead," says St. Paul, "then is CHRIST not risen²;" but if CHRIST is risen, then as surely shall we also arise. "If the SPIRIT of HIM Who raised up JESUS from the dead dwell in you, HE also shall quicken your mortal bodies³." Rightly, therefore, to believe in the Resurrection of our own bodies, we must fix our eyes in faith on our LORD's rising from the grave, and come to know "the power of His Resurrection." But it might be said, our LORD's Body did not see corruption; and that the difficulty, with respect to our mortal bodies, is much greater to the natural man: that our bodies, after decaying in the grave and mouldering to dust, should again be restored to life. But our Blessed LORD, in compassion to our weakness, has given us an instance of this in Lazarus; for HE raised him to life, not only after he was dead and buried, but also, as Martha his sister said, when his body must be in a state of corruption, being then dead four days⁴. And our LORD has given us another sign of the same; for we read in St. Matthew's Gospel, "The graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His Resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many⁵." And the same thing our LORD had before shown at great length, in the vision of the dry bones, in the 37th chapter of the Prophet Ezekiel:—"Thus saith the LORD GOD unto these bones, Behold, I will cause

¹ Acts xvii. 32.² 1 Cor. xv. 13.³ Rom. viii. 11.⁴ John xi. 39.⁵ Matt. xxvii. 52.

breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live." And the Prophet Daniel speaks of a state when even the bones themselves are wasted and gone; "and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting contempt⁶." And Job also: "I know that my REDEEMER liveth, and that HE shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold; and not another⁷."

Now in this passage, Job, by the SPIRIT of GOD, seems to speak of its being the very same body: "In my flesh shall I see God; Whom I shall see for myself, and not another." And this our Blessed LORD showed in many ways at His Resurrection, as if HE were saying, Handle, and feel, and see that it is I MYSELF, and not another⁸. HE showed it by having the marks of His Crucifixion about HIM, by being recognized and known by those whom HE had seen before; thus manifesting to them in various ways that it was the same Person. And this HE also showed to us especially by His Transfiguration on the Mount, that the same Body might be glorified and changed, and yet the same Body; and by Moses and Elias being then seen with HIM: men who had departed from this world so many hundred years before. HE showed us how other men should partake of this glory together with HIM, being seen with HIM in His glory. Setting before our eyes what St. Paul speaks of, that "HE shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the working whereby HE is able even to subdue all things unto HIMSELF⁹." For they also partook of His glory, as we read: "And there talked with HIM two men, who appeared in glory." And, at the same time, we read that His three Disciples were heavy with sleep. "And JESUS came and touched them, and said, Arise;" "and when they were awake, they saw His glory." And what is all this but to show that we also, when we sleep in the dust, shall awake at His

⁶ Dan. xii. 2.

⁷ Job xix. 25—27.

⁸ Luke xxiv. 39.

⁹ Phil. iii. 21.

powerful touch and voice ; as St. John says : “ It doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that when HE shall appear we shall be like HIM ; for we shall see HIM as HE is ¹. ”

Thus it is clear throughout Holy Scripture, that not only shall the spirits and souls of the departed come again, but “ those that are in their graves,” it is said,—*i. e.* the bodies also of the dead—“ shall hear His voice,” and shall arise.

In the next place, it appears that it will be the same body ; the same body, which, together with the soul, has done good or done evil, shall rise again, to be rewarded or to be punished together with the soul.

But, thirdly, we may observe, that, although it will be the same body, yet it will be so altered and changed as to be hardly like the same body, in many respects. Thus it is said, “ We shall be *changed*. ” And again : “ HE shall *change* our vile body that it may be like unto His glorious body. ” And St. Paul likens it to the sowing of seed : “ That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be. ” “ But GOD giveth it a body, as it hath pleased HIM ; and to every seed his own body. ” “ It is sown in dishonour ; it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power. It is sown a *natural body* ; it is raised a *spiritual body*. ”

And this, too, our Blessed LORD showed us when HE was upon earth ; for, although HE took such pains to prove that it was the same Body, yet HE showed also that it was different to what it was when HE went in and out among them. For HE appeared to them suddenly, and then disappeared again, and vanished out of their sight. HE came in among them, when the doors were fast locked, for fear of the Jews ; so as no natural Body could have done. HE ascended up to Heaven in their sight. And even before His death, not only at the Transfiguration, but at other times, HE showed them how even His human Body might be made spiritual ; for HE continued for forty days and forty nights without food : HE walked upon the waves of the sea ; and as if, in order to show us, that not HE alone but all His faithful followers should have the same spiritual bodies, HE commanded Peter also to do the same, and to walk upon the waters. And so

¹ 1 John iii. 2.

it is said that it shall be with those, whose souls and bodies shall be glorified in heaven, "they shall hunger no more and thirst no more." "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain." "They shall follow the LAMB whithersoever HE goeth." They shall need neither sun nor moon in that new Heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. And thus, as our LORD arose from earth, and was seen ascending up into Heaven, so it is said,— "Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD in the air: and so shall we ever be with the LORD²." So shall our bodies be changed when the trumpet shall sound, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

And not only shall the bodies of good men be thus raised, incorruptible and glorified, but the bodies of the wicked shall also arise, at the last Day, in order that they may receive "the things done in the body." For the body, as well as the soul, shall suffer for those things that have been done in the body. The "whole body," says our LORD, "shall be cast into hell." And it may be on account of some reason of this kind that the sufferings of the wicked, in the next world, are often described as bodily sufferings. It is said, "Bind him, hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness." Hell is described as a place where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth: where there burns a fire that shall never be quenched; and where there is a worm that never dies. For all these things speak of bodily sufferings. But then again, as the bodies of good men, although they shall be in some sense the same, yet shall be changed, so as to feel no hunger nor thirst: so likewise shall it be with the wicked; for their bodies shall never perish; the fire that consumes them shall never go out; the worm that preys upon them shall never come to an end. As the fire which Moses beheld in the wilderness was burning in the bush, while at the same time the bush was not consumed; so this fire shall burn, but their bodies shall not be consumed.

Now this is a consideration which of itself, one would think, must have weight with us. Many of the temptations to sin are

² 1 Thess. iv. 17.

temptations of the body ; such as the love of bodily ease and comfort, intemperance, sensual pleasures, a reluctance to subdue and mortify the body : but surely if men are so hardened that they do not know what the sufferings of the soul are, that worst of all pains, the pain of a wounded conscience, yet one would think a consideration of the intolerable pains of hell would make any pains here very light and tolerable. Thus our Blessed Lord speaks of “ plucking out the right eye, and cutting off the right hand,”—the worst bodily pains and privations that we could endure upon earth, as to be embraced instantly, rather than to have the whole body cast into hell. And our Lord is, in this case, speaking of an unmortified lust ; teaching us that we must not expect to overcome it, without some pains and trouble in mortifying and subduing the body and the evil thoughts of the flesh. Now if we knew that we had the seeds of some bad disease about us, which we were told would entirely destroy the body, in a very painful way, unless rooted out, we should spare no trouble and expense to get rid of it ; and, if necessary, we would have it cut out before it spreads. So is every sin that is done in the body : it makes the body to be unfit to be the Temple of the HOLY GHOST : it destroys that Divine life in the body which will make it meet to be raised up as a spiritual body at the last Day : it is within as the seed of that fire which will never be quenched : it makes our very body itself to bring forth that worm that never dieth.

The reason why all things, appertaining to death, the deadness, and then the decay and corruption of the body, are so painful to us, is, because these accompaniments of temporal death are given to us by ALMIGHTY GOD, as a sign and warning of that death of the soul and body from which CHRIST has come to save us.

But that second death of the body and soul is, we are assured, so terrible and intolerable, that nothing can in any way be compared to it that we are acquainted with on earth. And, in like manner, that condition, in which “ this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality,” is so blessed and glorious, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard ; neither hath it entered into the heart of men to conceive. They that shall be accounted worthy to attain that life are called “ the children of the Resurrection ;” being “ equal to the

Angels" and "the children of God³." They are equal to the Angels, because CHRIST took not upon HIM the nature of Angels, but the substance of our flesh; and of His Body and Blood do we partake; His Flesh is to be the seed of immortality even in our mortal bodies, so that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body. We pray, in our Communion Service, not only that our souls may be washed by His Blood at that blessed Sacrament, but also that our bodies may be made clean by His Body; and if our bodies are made clean by His Body, that could not see corruption, then, doubtless, the SPIRIT that raised up JESUS from the dead shall likewise quicken our mortal bodies⁴.

It is on account of a change so very great, for good or ill, which awaits us, that all the distinctions of this world are in the sight of GOD as nothing: outward prosperity, health of body, high spirits, abundance of goods, are no sign of His approbation: distress and sickness, depression of mind, and poverty, are no proof of His displeasure; but the contrary. The time is so short, and the change is so great, that all things of this world are as absolutely nothing in the sight of HIM Who sees things as they really are; and Who has given us to understand that the whole world is not to be compared, for one moment, with the value of one soul,—“What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” Our LORD here speaks of it, as if the value of one soul was so unspeakably greater as not to be mentioned with all the world. All the world, we know, and the kingdoms and glory of it, Satan offered our LORD, in the Temptation, if HE would worship him. And, no doubt, Satan would at any time offer the whole world to obtain one soul, for he knows how inconceivably greater is the price: but, alas! he has no occasion to offer the whole world to us, for he can buy us at a far less price: to some he would offer a few acres of land, but many he can obtain without offering so much as that. Any one who knows what is going on in most buying and selling can too plainly see this; for how very little in these days a man will sell his soul. So wonderful is this mystery of iniquity, this man of sin that we bear about us; this body of death, the old Adam!

In the Sadducees, who believed not in the Resurrection, this

³ Luke xx. 35, 36.

⁴ See John vi. 63.

might have been expected, for “they knew not the Scriptures nor the power of God;” but we should take it much amiss if any one supposed we did not know these things perfectly well.

But he that knoweth, and doeth not, shall be beaten with many stripes.

SERMON CCXCVIII.

THE LIFE EVERLASTING.

2 Cor. iv. 18.

“ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

WHATEVER differences of knowledge there may be between the old and young, the learned and ignorant, yet all know equally well this truth, that the things seen are temporal, and the things unseen are eternal. All know equally well the infinite difference which must exist between that which is but for a time, and that which must be for ever. And all persons, one would think, must occasionally have thoughts forced on their minds respecting this vast difference. So far, therefore, all persons are alike. But here comes in the great distinction,—a difference as great as that between Heaven and earth, between Heaven and Hell,—which we know assuredly does exist between different persons, in the long run and course of their lives. And this difference consists in the manner in which they direct their thoughts, their actions, their affections—to things seen, or things unseen. This difference can of course only be fully known hereafter. But thus far each person must surely see and lament for himself, that he is at best but like one of a doubtful mind ; that he knows the consequence of things unseen, but thinks too much of things seen and temporal.

Surely, in the sight of an angel, or of a soul that is released from the body, it must be a very wonderful and astonishing spectacle to witness what is going on now among us ; so much

allowed, and known, and spoken of, respecting the things that are beyond the grave; and yet the little effect this knowledge has on our lives. They must see death, as it were, watching us, following hard upon us, and becoming nearer, and gaining upon us day by day; and no single day or hour when we can be sure that he will not overtake us, hurry us into the eternal world, and close the door for ever. But yet, while we know this, and hear of it, and speak of it, we seem to spend our lives as if in doubt which of the two we should choose—things temporal, or things eternal. If we were asked, indeed, there is no doubt which we should choose: we would be shocked at the very supposition. We acknowledge most readily that life is but a shadow, a dream, a vapour,—that compared with Eternity, it is but like a single drop in the sea, like a grain of sand in the vast desert, like a speck of dust in the balance, that it is by no means to be compared with it for a moment—that in this life there is nothing real, nothing substantial—that the blessedness of beholding God's countenance, that the misery of suffering in a fire that can never go out, are such, that the very greatest differences in this life, from that of the heaviest earthly troubles to the greatest earthly happiness—the greatest glory to the greatest disgrace on earth, are absolutely nothing in the comparison. All this we necessarily allow at once as most true: we think that words cannot express the difference; that heart cannot conceive it.

We know it very well, and yet are as if we knew it not; and therefore Holy Scripture speaks of thoughtless and bad men not knowing these truths: and of good men coming to know them, more and more;—it speaks of bad men having no knowledge, and of good men coming to knowledge—to the knowledge of God, which is Eternal Life. And doubtless, when persons come to attend seriously to these things, when they think of them and act with regard to them—when they are brought to a deep earnest sense of them by the near prospect of death, by some great calamity or sickness, or alarm of conscience;—then the great reality of these things comes upon their minds as if for the first time, like a new light; as if they understood and comprehended that which they never understood or comprehended before; much as they may have heard of and talked about it. It seems as if before, their eyes had been blinded, their ears deaf,

and their hearts incapable of understanding ; and doubtless this is the right and true view of the case, because this is the way in which Holy Scripture usually describes it—speaking of those who in a worldly sense do indeed well know, and hear, and see the things of religion, yet as being in fact both blind, and deaf, and ignorant ; though they think that they see, and hear, and know as well or better than others. And there is perhaps nothing of which Holy Scripture so often assures us as this, that it is sin, and pride, and careless living, which causes all this difference in spiritual blindness and spiritual knowledge ; that a good life, and the grace of ALMIGHTY GOD which accompanies and produces it, can alone give what is called the seeing eye, and the hearing ear, and the heart to understand. We cannot in short know these things, unless GOD HIMSELF gives us to know them, as they can only be spiritually discerned ; and if GOD HIMSELF will, in His gracious mercy, give us to know them, then we shall know them after a heavenly manner : something after the same manner as we shall know them when we depart from the body, as Angels and Spirits know them who are in the presence of God.

Since therefore all these truths, of the transitory nature of things present, and the certainty of an Eternal hereafter, are written in God's Holy Word, which has gone forth to all the world ; and since all men are able to hear or read His Word in the Scriptures ; and since He has also stamped these great truths on all nature, so that even the natural man cannot but see and acknowledge them ; therefore we all alike know and understand in some sense, though it be but after an earthly manner, the value of things temporal and the value of things Eternal. But yet these things are to be known after a Divine and heavenly manner, in a way that few indeed come to know them ; in a way that we must give up our whole lives to learn them ; in a way that will make all these things appear to us so differently to what they do to a worldly mind, as light is to darkness, as seeing is to blindness.

And so far as GOD gives us to see the difference between things temporal and things Eternal, HE will give us to see all other things also with a far different mind. Then our best diligence towards obtaining that heavenly prize, will appear to be but sloth and indolence ; the pride of man will appear to be but

corruption, our best works such as we shall be glad to hide and forget; our least sins far more serious than we are apt to suppose; our sojourn upon earth far more short, at the longest, than we before considered it; the Coming of CHRIST, and the Eternal Judgment, far more near and close at hand, in like manner in which our blessed LORD and His Apostles have described it; in short, we come to understand and learn the meaning of all that Holy Scripture states, in such a sort that all our former unreflecting knowledge of it appears to be but blindness. And beyond all things, then shall we come to comprehend our blessed LORD's appeals to us; we shall come to know the meaning of His words, and the meaning of His sufferings, in a way that careless men little think of; to understand the awful nature of His wounds, and His sore agony, and almost as it were desertion of God, on the Cross, in His wrath at our disobedience; then shall we come to know the value of His Atoning Blood, the pledge and assurance of His Resurrection, the necessity of His constant Intercession for us. Then shall we come to feel and know the need we have of His gracious SPIRIT, when we are more and more conscious of our own weakness to attain so great a work, when we look at the things which are not seen, which are Eternal. And all this is nothing else but to come to know ourselves, and to know God.

Then, too, how important do all His sayings appear to us, His eye ever upon our hearts when we open the Gospels; how full of meaning all His parables; how full of encouragement all His miracles? All His commands are like stones that pave the way to the heavenly Jerusalem; and to miss any of them is to fall out of the way to Eternal Life. They are like the precious stones and the gold which are spoken of in the Revelation as paving the city of GOD; the thousands of gold and silver¹, which the Psalmist says are not so precious and dear unto him as GOD's commandments: and why are they so infinitely valuable and precious, but because they are weighed in that balance in which things unseen and Eternal are weighed? Then, too, he hears, and feels, and understands how narrow is the way of life, and trembles to think how few there are that find it; so that he

¹ Ps. cxix. 72.

must look to his only Guide and Guardian with great care, and treasure up all His words. There is a Collect² of the Church which turns the reflection of the text into a prayer; and no prayer can be more suitable for him who comes to a deep sense of this most awful and last Article of the Creed; it seems with new force and application to express all his needs, his great want of assistance, and sure hope of attaining it; when he looks to God as the Protector of all who put their trust in HIM; feels that without HIM nothing is strong, nothing is holy; and prays to HIM to increase and multiply upon us His mercy, that He being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things Eternal.

Surely we should be constantly renewing in ourselves this holy contemplation, calling in this prayer, as it were, to our aid and assistance continually, and by such means stirring up within ourselves at all times holy thoughts. Whenever tempted to any sin, the reflection contained in such a prayer, the appeal to ALMIGHTY GOD which it contains, and the call for His aid, might check us from doing any thing which we shall wish undone, through the eternal ages that are to follow; when we find ourselves slothful and indolent, it might stir us up to be doing some work of religion or charity; when about to engage in any religious duty, it would awaken our minds to awful and serious thoughts.

The knowledge, the mere knowledge of these things, in a worldly sense, is common to us all; what we all need is that knowledge which will move the whole heart and life, that knowledge which is spiritual and heavenly; and the only way to attain this Divine knowledge, or reflecting sense and consideration, is by constantly acting up to it, and doing something under a sense of it; by praying to ALMIGHTY GOD to fix more and more the thought in our hearts; to be constantly doing little things which can make no difference to us in this world, which will make us in no sense richer, nor more honoured and respected, nor more comfortable and satisfied with ourselves and our external condition; such things as afford us no great pleasure or temptation at the time, but it may be, rather the contrary; but such things

² Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

as will make a difference to us in the unseen world. Such, for instance, is that of seizing every little opportunity for private prayer; of deferring, if necessary, other little worldly matters and conveniences for this purpose; of asking God's assistance and blessing upon every thing we undertake; such as that of going to Church; of engaging in intercourse with others; of our daily sustenance; of engaging in our calling; of going in and out; of doing this, I say, with a view that such things may be made by ALMIGHTY GOD profitable to us in our Christian calling: that they may not pass by and go for nothing with regard to our heavenly interests, but be like talents which have gained something on the last Day. That so every opportunity may be fruitful in some good. Every thing that passes through our hands, though it may be earthly and perishable, yet may be stamped with the image of our heavenly FATHER. So that even receiving our food, doing our daily labour, reading a book, any customary religious duty, mixing in society with other people, every little thing of this sort which we are engaged in from day to day, may be put into the scale of Eternity, may add something to our comfort and hope on that Day; by asking continually God's blessing upon it, and going through with it in the fear and love of HIM. For we are told expressly, that God will bring every work into judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

We should use ourselves every day when we rise in the morning to consider, this day will bring me one day nearer to my latter end; may it with God's mercy render me the more fit to meet it. Even at such a time, when we rise in the morning, even before we can retire and settle to our morning devotions, there is many a Psalm, such as the 139th, and many a Prayer, such as the Collect we have been considering, which, if stored in the memory, may come to our assistance, to keep off worldly thoughts, to fix in our hearts a sense of God's Presence, Who is about our path and about our bed, and of those unseen things which are Eternal.

Depend upon it, if we would have a reasonable hope at the hour of death, and any comfort on the Day of Judgment, we must be practising these things continually: we must not think any thing whatever a small matter, for "he that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little."

To many of our relations and friends all these things are already for ever gone by ; these opportunities for repentance and amendment, for laying up store in heaven : and be assured that in an instant, before we are aware of it, they will have gone by to us also. When the door of life has been closed, and we are laid in trembling expectation of the Judge's coming, then we shall think every hour in our past lives of very great value and importance. We shall be amazed and astonished to think how we ever could have been so mad, so foolish, as to have heard, year after year, all our lives long, Sunday after Sunday, sermon after sermon, day after day, and yet never seriously taken to heart these things. Let us look back on any sin, any neglect of duty, any breach of God's commandments which we may have committed for any pleasure or gain ; where is it now ? Where is the advantage ? Where is the satisfaction we now derive from it ? It is absolutely nothing at all ; but the sin remains—remains for ever and ever, unless so far as it is washed out by our tears and by the Blood of CHRIST, upon our most thorough and sincere repentance ; for our repentance and our tears are only by the HOLY SPIRIT, and owing to the Blood of CHRIST. All the little enjoyment has gone by, and left us either bitter repentance or eternal punishment ; surely there are some who would even now gladly give their right hand, or their right eye, not to have done the things which they have done.

To such persons, and indeed to us all, the little that remains of our life upon earth is of the very highest value ; not to be trifled away upon earthly objects, which will leave us at last with our hands empty ; not on objects of pride, which will leave us tenfold more work to undo ; not to be spent in idleness, or worse than idleness, when we have so vast a work to perform, so inconceivable a prize to obtain, so infinite a misery to escape from.

Is there any one whatever that doubts but that every day—nay, every hour we live, does make a difference in our condition for ever and ever ? If this is indeed the fact—so undeniable that no seriously thinking Christian can deny it—then surely we have not one day, not one hour to spare, not one that we can call our own. If it be spent in innocent amusement, in manual labour, in conversing with men, it may still be sanctified and hallowed by the fear of God and the thought of His presence. If, which

is very far better, it be given up to earnest prayer, to works of charity, to fasting and confession of sin ; then inconceivably great is the gain. Oh, how happy indeed, how blessed should we be, if the many hours of our past lives, which we have spent in unprofitable labours and worldly pursuits, had only been given up to the service of God ! This may be said even of our more innocent employments, how much more of those which have been spent in sin.

Let us think more and more of what Eternity must be ; let us compare it with the largest spaces of time we can conceive on earth ; let us think of living a thousand years in bliss or in torments ; let us think what it will be to add a thousand years to that, and ten thousand years again to this ; and then to reflect that after all this is past, we are not one hour nearer to the end ; and that if we add millions and millions of years to that, still all this is nothing to the everlasting ages of Eternity. Let us only think seriously of this, and that where the tree falls, there it must lie : that death may overtake us any day, and then our lot is for ever unchangeable. Nothing more to be done ; no availing prayer ; no tears that can change the irreversible sentence ; for ever in the condition of the rich man, or of Lazarus.

Let us pray to ALMIGHTY GOD to fix this deeply and seriously in our hearts, and under this thought, let us set about our daily work : considering that the time for this great change is so near, that our Blessed LORD speaks of it as being already at hand. “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is ³ ;” our LORD stops as it were to alter the expression, as if it were not coming but already come—“ the hour is coming and now is, when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the SON of GOD.” All that are in their graves shall hear His voice, and “ shall come forth ; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.”

³ John v. 25.

SERMON CCXCIX.

THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY GHOST.

ST. MATT. xxviii. 19.

“Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.”

WE have all been baptized in this most awful Name of the Three Persons in One GOD; but the text contains two points of command, not only of our being baptized, but also of our being taught, or “made disciples¹,” in connexion with it. The command is, “Teach ye, baptizing.” And this is immediately brought before us by the Creed being made, as it were, a part of baptism; for the Creeds are but the Church’s explanation of what is meant by the Three Persons in One GOD; whereby we are shown, that although GOD is but One, yet that there are Three distinct Persons. This is now shortly expressed in the Catechism, “I learn to believe in GOD the FATHER, Who hath made me and all the world;—in GOD the SON, Who hath redeemed me and all mankind;—in GOD the HOLY GHOST, Who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of GOD.”

Now, our being baptized into this Name, I may say, into this doctrine, is a very awful matter; it makes our salvation to depend on the manner in which we receive this doctrine; of this the Athanasian Creed fully warns us, that “except every one do keep this faith whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.” On this great and sacred day², therefore, I purpose

¹ Marginal reading.

² Trinity Sunday.

saying a few words on this point: first, that the Bible is full of this doctrine; and, secondly, that our lives must realize the same. Every thing that is the work of God, and hallowed to HIM, must bear the marks of the Three Persons in One God.

Now, it is not out of Scripture that any one gains this doctrine for himself; but as soon as we are taught it by the Creeds of the Church, then we find that, as a key, it opens all the Scriptures. In things of great importance we find always some intimation of Three Persons in One God.

Thus, at the creation, in the first chapter of Genesis, the SPIRIT of God moved upon the face of the waters; GOD the FATHER is speaking to GOD the SON, saying, "Let Us make man in Our own image." At the destruction of Sodom three angels appeared unto Abraham, but Abraham speaks as if they were but one, saying, "My LORD, if I have found favour in Thy sight, I pray THEE ³." Thus again, at the birth of CHRIST, the angel says to the blessed Virgin, "The HOLY GHOST shall come upon thee, and the power of the HIGHEST shall overshadow thee: therefore that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the SON of God ⁴." Thus again, at our LORD's baptism, the Voice of GOD the FATHER was heard, saying, "This is My beloved SON;" and the SPIRIT was seen descending like a dove; and the SON of GOD was beheld below ⁵. And so likewise at the Transfiguration, the SPIRIT was present in the Cloud that overshadowed them; and the same Voice of the FATHER was heard; and CHRIST was seen as GOD and Man ⁶.

And sometimes this may be observed by the same Name of GOD being three times repeated, as to Moses at the burning bush, "I am the GOD of Abraham, the GOD of Isaac, and the GOD of Jacob ⁷." And in the blessing which GOD appointed His priests to pronounce, His Name is repeated thrice, "The LORD bless thee; the LORD make His face shine upon thee; the LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace ⁸." And in the same way, by thrice repeating the same word, are the seraphims described in the sixth chapter of Isaiah, as crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of Hosts." In like

³ Gen. i. 2. 26; xviii. 2, 3.

⁴ Luke i. 35.

⁵ Matt. iii. 16, 17.

⁶ Luke ix. 34, 35.

⁷ Exod. iii. 6.

⁸ Num. vi. 24—26.

manner, in the LORD's Prayer, we say, "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory;" the kingdom is CHRIST's, the power is the HOLY GHOST's, and the glory is to GOD the FATHER.

But sometimes these Three Persons in One GOD are expressed by three different Names, as in the words of St. Paul, "The grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST⁹." And in the words of the text, "In the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST." And in the expression of our LORD's at the last Supper, "The COMFORTER, which is the HOLY GHOST, Whom the FATHER will send in My name¹."

Sometimes, again, we may observe that, in the same circumstance, the power is at one time attributed to one Person of the GODHEAD, and at another time to another. Thus, our LORD says, "No man can come unto ME except the FATHER which hath sent ME draw him²;" and, "I thank THEE, O FATHER, that THOU hast revealed these things unto babes;" but HE also says, "No man cometh unto the FATHER but by ME³;" "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." But in another place our LORD ascribes it to the HOLY GHOST, saying, "The COMFORTER, which is the HOLY GHOST, HE shall teach you all things;" and we are told by St. Paul, "No man can say that JESUS is the LORD but by the HOLY GHOST⁴."

In like manner, our LORD's resurrection from the grave is, in different places, attributed to each Person of the GODHEAD; at one time to GOD the FATHER, for it is said, "THOU shalt not leave My soul in hell, neither shalt THOU suffer Thy HOLY ONE to see corruption⁵." At another time our LORD says of His own life, "No man taketh it from ME, but I lay it down of MYSELF; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again⁶." But it is also ascribed to the HOLY SPIRIT, "If the SPIRIT of HIM that raised up JESUS from the dead dwell in you, HE that raised up CHRIST from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His SPIRIT that dwelleth in you⁷." Again, in this very place it is said that our mortal bodies are raised of GOD the FATHER by the SPIRIT; but our LORD says of HIMSELF, "I am

⁹ 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

¹ John xiv. 26.

² John vi. 44.

³ John xiv. 6.

⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

⁵ Psalm xvi. 11.

⁶ John x. 18.

⁷ Rom. viii. 11.

the Resurrection and the Life;" and also, "The dead shall hear the voice of the SON of GOD, and they that hear shall live⁸."

In like manner, with regard to quickening our souls in this mortal life, sometimes the mention is made of one Person of the GODHEAD, and sometimes it is attributed to another; as is shown throughout our LORD's last discourse with His disciples, before HE was crucified, in St. John's Gospel. Thus HE says, "I will pray the FATHER, and HE shall give you another COMFORTER, that HE may abide with you for ever." But immediately afterwards HE says, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you." And again, soon after, HE speaks of the FATHER also, "If a man love ME, he will keep my words; and My FATHER will love him, and WE will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

From all these things, and many others of the same kind, we may see what great and awful things are signified in the text, of our being made disciples, and baptized in the Name of the ever-blessed TRINITY.

All Three Persons are spoken of as raising up JESUS CHRIST from the dead; all Three, as quickening our souls in this life; all Three, as raising our mortal bodies on the last day. And as this power of the blessed TRINITY was signified by our LORD's being three days in the grave, so at Baptism it used to be the case, that the bodies of those that were baptized were three times immersed in water, to signify, not only that we are to be buried with CHRIST, but also the Three Persons of the GODHEAD, into whose Name we are baptized, by whose power we are now raised up to a new life, and hope to be, by the same power, raised in body and soul hereafter.

Now, each one of us separately is baptized into this faith; let us consider what this signifies,—that each Person of the ever-adorable and blessed TRINITY is now being exerted and engaged, if I may so speak, to bring even one soul into its everlasting condition. As at the creation of the world, we read of all Three Persons of the GODHEAD, and that the FATHER by His SON, and through the HOLY SPIRIT, made all things; as all the Three Persons were present in the resurrection of CHRIST from the dead; so are they all Three present now in the regeneration and renewal

⁸ John v. 25.

of one soul, to bring one soul into its everlasting condition, from the kingdom of darkness into light.

And each one of us may say, that one soul is my soul ; it is for me and for my sake that the ever-blessed TRINITY is now working, as if it were for me alone. This it is which the Church teaches us in the Catechism, when, in summing up the Creed, it speaks of " GOD the FATHER Who hath made me, GOD the SON Who hath redeemed me, GOD the HOLY GHOST Who sanctifieth me ;" thus does it bring the Creed home to us all, to each one, as being baptized " in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST." GOD the FATHER is *my* CREATOR, GOD the SON is *my* REDEEMER, GOD the HOLY GHOST is *my* SANCTIFIER.

This is the manner in which we are to hold this Catholic faith, each one for himself ; and if it could be put in words as it must be received in the heart, what would it come to but something of this kind :—

O most wonderful and gracious FATHER, incomprehensible, unspeakable, ALMIGHTY, Whom no heart can think of worthily, and no tongue can express ; the FATHER of all the worlds, the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the FATHER of spirits ; with all adoration and prostration of heart, and soul, and body, I acknowledge THEE to be my CREATOR, my FATHER, my PRESERVER !

O holy and most adorable SON of GOD most high, by Whom, and for Whom, and in Whom all the worlds were made ; dwelling in the light that no man can approach unto ; incomprehensible, unspeakable, ALMIGHTY GOD ! THOU didst come from the bosom of Thy FATHER, and humble THYSELF below the meanest of Thy creatures, in order to save me from misery everlasting, to pluck me as a brand from the fire, out of the never-ending torments of hell ; and still day by day art interceding for me, that I may be rescued out of this wicked and miserable world, to be with THEE to all eternity !

O most blessed and awful SPIRIT, incomprehensible, unspeakable, ALMIGHTY GOD, proceeding from the FATHER and the SON ; Who with the FATHER and the SON together is worshipped and glorified ; the HOLY GHOST, against Whom he that speaketh shall never be forgiven, either in this world or that which is to come ; from Whom alone cometh every good and perfect gift ; THOU

sanctifiest me ; from THEE proceedeth every holy thought, word, and work, which ever has been in me ; THOU art watching over me day by day, night after night ; every thought I entertain is ever known to THEE, every evil word I speak is heard aloud by THEE, every work I do is remembered and stored up by THEE, Who art the great Witness ; THOU art my COMFORTER, every good thought of heavenly comfort which I have is from THEE ; THOU art the SPIRIT of Truth : all lies, all hypocrisies, all deceits, all errors, all heresies, that find place in me, will prove that THOU art gone away !

O most adorable and mysterious TRINITY, Three Persons in One God, incomprehensible, unspeakable, ALMIGHTY GOD ! Three Persons, but One Substance ; by Whom, and for Whom, and in Whom I was created ; and in Whom I live, and move, and have my being ; and before Whom I must very shortly appear, stripped of all things, to give account of all the motions of my soul, and spirit, and body ; on this awful day I remember THEE ; with deep anguish of heart I remember THEE, Whom I have offended so grievously ; with comfort and hope I remember all Thy forbearance and loving-kindness towards me in that which is past ; with love I remember Thy sure promises of help ; with fear I think of Thy assurances, that, notwithstanding Thy love, so few shall be saved !

Such are the thoughts which I suppose must be present to every reflecting Christian on this day, when he humbles himself to the dust, in meditating on the great mystery of the Three Persons in One God. On other days we can think of something that has happened in this world ; of CHRIST rising from the grave, or of His ascending to heaven, or of the HOLY GHOST coming down on the Apostles : but on this day we can think of nothing but of “ that which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive ; ” of His incomprehensible nature, before Whom we are but as miserable worms and shadows : or, as David says, as “ a flea or a dead dog.” And yet if we do not conceive rightly of God, according to this doctrine, without doubt we shall perish everlastingly. But as deeds are the tongue of the heart, as by their fruits men are known, and they that do the will alone can know the doctrine,

therefore it is evident that nothing else can be depended on but our lives, if we would know whether this great doctrine does influence our heart and affections.

If we truly believed and reflected on GOD as our MAKER and FATHER, then would there be an end to all complainings and discontent, respecting the fancied evils of this life ; and even under its greatest privations ; according to the expression of St. Peter, "let them that suffer according to the will of GOD, commit the keeping of their souls to HIM in well-doing, as unto a faithful CREATOR⁹." For surely it is impossible that so loving and kind a FATHER can give any thing but what is good to His creatures ; and how can we be dissatisfied at receiving good at His hands ? Now, it is impossible truly to consider this doctrine without being thus resigned ; and yet what is more uncommon than this spirit of perfect resignation ?

Again, what is more powerful in the hearts of us all than covetousness ? so much so, that it will be, I fear, the ruin of many souls among us, who think that they have nothing to apprehend from this vice. The influence which this has in stifling the love of GOD, and making it impossible for us rightly to believe in this doctrine to the saving of our souls, is so great, that if the Holy Scriptures are true, it will be found out when too late by many, that they have never believed in GOD as their FATHER, that is, have not been living with a true filial confidence in HIM, on account of this "mystery of iniquity." The Bible speaks of covetousness in a manner that no other book ever did ; and, indeed, we seem, for the most part, incapable of understanding what it means, when we bring to it the notions of the world.

Again, the love of ease and worldly comfort, to the forgetfulness of our poor and suffering brethren in CHRIST ; how could these reign as they do in the hearts of those who believe in a Heavenly FATHER, in such a sense as to consider themselves inheritors and sons of GOD, and joint-heirs with CHRIST ?

Again, how can we believe in CHRIST as our REDEEMER, if we are content day by day to live such lives, that it is like crucifying the SON of GOD afresh, and letting His holy Blood to be spilled on the ground, from thence to cry out against us ?

⁹ 1 Pet. iv. 19.

Some men now think, that if they believe in CHRIST once for all before they die, that it is all which will be required of them. They carelessly call to mind cases in Scripture which were, in fact, far different from their own ; for surely the penitent thief and others we read of in the Gospel, were cases not the same as ours : for once only, and for the first time, was CHRIST brought before them as their REDEEMER, and they believed in HIM ; but to us baptized in His name, HE calls aloud, and comes before us all our lives, stretching forth His hands to us all the day long from the Cross. To each one of us HE says, “ I am *thy* SAVIOUR and REDEEMER ; it was for thee that I came down from Heaven ; it was for thee I watched and prayed night and day ; it was for thee that I suffered such agony of mind ; for thee I was scourged, for thee I was abused, and buffeted, and spit upon ; for thee I was nailed to the wood and crucified ; for thee I caused all to be written which thou readest in the Gospels ; it was thee I thought of, it was of thy reading, of thy hearing, that I considered, when I did and suffered those things ; and all that thou hast thought, and all that thou hast done, and all that thou now doest, is as much present to ME as if I had none else but thee. Thine impurities, thine envyings and uncharitableness, thy proud and angry thoughts and words, are as well known to ME as My own wounds, and are weighed and considered together with them. I have done all for thee that could be done ; but thou hast done very little or nothing for ME. Count over thy sacrifices, thy ventures in giving up this world for My sake ; and what are they ? The door is now soon to be closed, after which all that I have done will be in vain to move and change thee or thy condition.

Thirdly and lastly ; who is there that sufficiently and rightly believes in GOD the HOLY GHOST, as of HIM Who is his own Sanctifier, Who is to him, ever since he was baptized, as if to none but him in all the world, the COMFORTER, the HOLY GHOST, the SPIRIT of Truth, full of comfort, full of holiness, full of truth ?

If we are about to receive any great earthly guest, whom we highly love and reverence, into our houses, we are naturally very careful to make preparations for him, that nothing should meet his eyes that should displease him ; but that every thing should be so prepared as to show how we wish to do him honour.

The HOLY SPIRIT of God hath promised to come and make His abode with us, even so intimately as if there were no one else that HE cared for in the world, on account of the greatness of His love towards each one of us; and has told us in what way we can render our hearts meet for His reception. The High and Lofty ONE that inhabiteth eternity, maketh His dwelling with the lowly and with them that are of a humble and contrite spirit. The COMFORTER is with them that mourn. The pure in heart shall see God.

My brethren, is there any punishment that can be too bad for those who habitually forget these things? We think that very dreadful must be the pains of hell, if they are as Scripture describes, without any mitigation or end; and the sinner secretly in his own heart flatters himself, that a God so gracious will not visit for ever with such intolerable woes the sins of this short life.

But is it not all throughout perfectly consistent? "I know that whatsoever God doeth," says the wise man, "it shall be for ever¹." Do we consider what God is Who is thus trifled with by man? Do we reflect on what it is for HIM Who is so unspeakably great, to have done and to be doing so much for us?

When we remember what we are, and what we have done, are there any tears which can express the greatness of this loss? Can any humiliation, can any thing we can do and suffer be enough to speak our want of love, our neglect, our wilful disobedience, nay, our secret enmity against a God so unspeakably good, so incomprehensible in His unwearied love towards us, so infinite in His holiness, in His Almighty power? Is there any thing sufficient to speak our repentance before HIM? Is there any thing during the short remainder of our stay in this world too much to express our self-abasement before so good, so great, and terrible a God? No; we see these things, we confess them. But when we have confessed them, what do we do?

We go home to our houses, and there endeavour, as soon as we can, in idle conversation, or thoughts and plans about this world, to drive away the thoughts of God.

¹ Eccles. iii. 14.

O most gracious and holy God, before Whom I must soon appear, my CREATOR, RESTORER, and SUPPORTER, let me not forget THEE ! Let not the low cares or pleasures of this fading scene lead me to drown or drive away the thoughts of THEE, for Whom alone I was made, in Whom I must live and die, or it were better for me never to have been born !

SERMON CCC.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

HEB. viii. 10.

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the LORD; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to ME a people.”

THERE are three especial occasions in which GOD has given His laws to man. The first was from Mount Sinai when HE delivered the ten commandments; for although HE gave laws to the children of Israel all the time they were in the wilderness, yet it was then more especially. The second time was in the Sermon on the Mount, as we read in the fifth and two following chapters of St. Matthew; for although throughout the Gospels our SAVIOUR delivers us His commandments, yet it was then more especially that HE gave us the laws of His kingdom. And the third time was on the day of Pentecost, when the HOLY SPIRIT came down to write these laws in the hearts of Christians. For then was fulfilled that prophecy of Jeremiah, as St. Paul says in the eighth chapter to the Hebrews, which he thus quotes at length from the prophet: “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with

the house of Israel after those days, saith the LORD: I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to ME a people¹."

But now, although GOD's Law has been thus published to us at several times, yet not one of these publications does away with the other, or supersedes it; neither is contrary to the other, neither is useless; but the latter assists us to keep the former; they are, in fact, like their Divine AUTHOR, Three in One, and One in Three.

Thus our LORD says, in the Sermon on the Mount, that HE has not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them to the very utmost: and this HE shows by taking several instances of the commandments given by Moses, and saying that HE shall require them to be kept in spirit, not in the letter only; as, for instance, that he who is angry with his brother breaks the sixth commandment; and he that looks on a woman with lust, is guilty of breaking the seventh commandment. And in another place HE tells us, that there is no keeping the commandments without the love of GOD and the love of our neighbour; and that this love will keep the ten commandments².

But now it was the SPIRIT which was given on the day of Pentecost, Who inspires us with the love of GOD and the love of man. And therefore our blessed SAVIOUR said, "HE shall lead you into all truth, HE shall teach you all things." "The anointing which ye have received," says St. John, "teacheth you of all things³." And in prophecy it is said of Christians, "They shall be all taught of GOD⁴." "I will put My laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts." And these Laws which the SPIRIT writes in the heart, are no other than the ten commandments, which HE gives us power rightly to know and fulfil by the love of GOD and our neighbour.

Now there are many points in which these occasions bear on each other: the Law on Mount Sinai was given out amid "thunderings, and lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet." What was this but to remind us of the day of Judgment, when all mankind will have to be judged according to that Law: when

¹ Jer. xxxi. 31—34.

² Matt. xxii. 40.

³ 1 John ii. 27.

⁴ Isa. liv. 13.

the SON of Man shall appear as the Lightning, and the Trumpet shall sound, and all men shall be judged. When the people entreated that GOD would speak to them no more by such terrible signs, HE graciously promised a Prophet like unto Moses from among their brethren, Who should more fully declare His law to them. And this was no doubt fulfilled when, in the Sermon on the Mount, our SAVIOUR opened His mouth with blessings. But here it must be observed, that, although there were then no terrible sights to remind us of the Day of Judgment, yet it is throughout brought to our mind by our blessed SAVIOUR HIMSELF. In giving out His commandments, HE speaks throughout of the Day of Judgment; bringing it before us not sensibly, as on Mount Sinai, but spiritually. You see that in this our LORD carries out, as it were, the meaning of all those things on Mount Sinai, leading our thoughts throughout to the great Day.

And on the day of Pentecost, St. Peter connects all the sights that then took place with the Day of Judgment⁵.

Again; when Moses gave out the Law in the wilderness, this was accompanied with a vast number of miracles, by which GOD brought them out of Egypt and sustained them in the desert; showing thereby His mighty power, that they might fear to break His commandments.

So likewise when our SAVIOUR gave us His commandments, this also was accompanied with a vast number of miracles, in order to encourage us to keep His commandments. For the great end of His going about healing diseases seems to have been to show us all, unto the end of the world, that we may do all things through His strength. That strict and high as His commandments are, yet we have not to climb to heaven, nor to dive into the deep, for it is "in thine heart and in thy mouth:" that HE is most intimately present with us at all times to keep the heart and keep the tongue. HE did all these things to lead us to love HIM, and to trust in HIM; for by the love of HIM, and by faith in HIM we should be able to keep the commandments at all times.

And on the day of Pentecost the same was more fully shown; for then it was not only GOD working miracles upon earth, but

⁵ Acts ii. 20.

believers themselves worked miracles and prophesied, to show us still more fully, that not only do we Christians know what we ought to do, but we have also power to perform it. This is the great difference between us Christians and the Jews of old, that we have "GOD with us," IMMANUEL. We have the same Law that they had, and it is to be kept by us in a far more strict and heavenly way than it was kept by them; "for unless your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case," says our LORD, "enter into the kingdom of heaven." But then we have the SPIRIT of GOD given us to perform them, which the Jews had not. The commandments given to the Jews were written on tables of stone: but to the Christian they are written on fleshly tables of the heart by the finger of God. The new covenant given unto us is this: "I will put My laws into their mind; and write them in their hearts." For when the love of GOD and the love of our neighbour is in our hearts, that love of itself becomes a law to us: that love will of itself fulfil all the commandments.

So that Mount Sinai, from which the ten commandments were given, might be said to be the mount of terror, from the awful judgments which it threatened; whereas that from which our SAVIOUR delivered to us His Sermon on the Mount, might be said to be the mountain of blessedness, from the exceeding great and gracious promises which it holds out; but on the day of Pentecost we are come to the heavenly Mount Sion, the mountain of holiness; that Christian Church in which the commandments of GOD are fulfilled by those who inherit the promises of the Gospel, walking in the SPIRIT, and living by faith.

The very words, indeed, in which the Law is given out on Mount Sinai, teach the Christian that he has to fulfil it in a far better and more blessed way than the Israelites of old; inasmuch as they only had the shadow of good things to come, but we have those good things themselves. For in the twentieth chapter of Exodus we read, "GOD spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy GOD, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." But now, when our blessed SAVIOUR tells us how HE would have all these commandments kept, in so heavenly and spiritual a manner, HE makes to us a very much higher claim than this. HE seems to say, "I am

the LORD thy God, Who brought thee out of the Egypt of this wicked world, out of the captivity and bondage of sin, into the glorious liberty of the children of God." God of old brought destruction upon Pharaoh and Egypt in order to bring His own people out from thence; and so also, after the day of Pentecost, did HE work miracles and brought destruction on the Jewish nation in order to bring the Christians out from thence to be His peculiar people, zealous of good works. But these were only outward signs and figures of the great destruction which our LORD brought on evil spirits when HE delivered us from their power. As Moses in Egypt overcame all the arts of the magicians and the power of Pharaoh, showing that he was stronger than they; so did our LORD overcome all the power of the enemy; in order that we might be set free according to His own words: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils⁶."

Now it may be observed, that the Israelites of old whom God brought out of Egypt, did not keep the Law; "they kept not the covenant of God, and would not walk in His law; but forgot what HE had done, and the wonderful works that HE had showed for them." "They thought not of His hand, and of the day when HE delivered them from the hand of the enemy⁷." But this is not so with faithful Christians; the few that walk along the narrow way, and enter in at the strait gate of life, to inherit those good things which "God hath prepared for them that love Him." Their righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees; they keep the commandments not only in the letter, but also in spirit and in truth; in that sense in which our LORD says, "If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments." These are they of whom HE graciously says, "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." And again, "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth ME; and he that loveth ME, shall be loved of My FATHER; and WE will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

⁶ Luke xi. 21.

⁷ Ps. lxxviii. 11, 12. 43.

This it is which St. Paul declares, in this passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that although God's chosen people of old did not keep His commandments, yet that Christians will keep them, having them written on their hearts. He says, "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the LORD. I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to ME a people."

Now this is a very serious and important matter, which Christians very little consider; they deceive themselves somehow by numberless false devices and opinions, into thinking that they are not bound to keep the commandments. They do not reflect, that the trumpet which sounded so terribly on Mount Sinai is, as it were, the same which will be heard again on the Day of Judgment. They do not consider, that Christians must fulfil the Law to the utmost in their hearts and lives; they must fulfil it in CHRIST, or rather CHRIST must fulfil it in them, if they would be the people of God, and have God for their God at last.

It may indeed be said, the ten commandments are not so difficult to keep according to the letter; as, for instance, none of us are inclined to worship graven images; and we trust that none of us have committed murder or adultery, or by God's mercy are likely to do so: but then our SAVIOUR has explained all these commandments to go so far, and to depend so much on the keeping of the heart, on thoughts and words, and little daily actions, that none of us can be guiltless before God.

And this is implied in the Communion Service when the commandments are read; for after each commandment we say, "LORD, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." That is to say, that when we examine our past lives, according to each one of the commandments, we find that we have need of mercy; that we have broken it in numberless instances that we can call to mind; and that we require God's especial grace to incline our hearts to keep it for the future better than we have done. How then, may it be said, can any

of us hope to stand in the last Day, if we be judged by the ten commandments of Mount Sinai, as our LORD and JUDGE explains them?

Yet, notwithstanding, there is nothing more frequent than declarations of CHRIST that our final salvation does depend on our keeping the commandments: it is of these that HE is speaking when HE says, "Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven ⁸."

And surely no serious person can doubt, but that all we read in the Gospel, if it means any thing, does show us, that to Christians there is given power to keep the commandments. It certainly does signify that CHRIST and His HOLY SPIRIT will be present unto the end of the world, to heal the diseases of our souls, and to give us strength to keep the Law, which was delivered on Mount Sinai; so that we may be able to stand in the Day of Judgment.

It is very true that our souls are full of diseases of all kinds; but it is no less true, that through the atoning Blood of CHRIST, and the presence of the COMFORTER, our souls may be healed. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled with that righteousness by CHRIST working in them. Surely this was the mind of St. Paul when he said, "I can do all things through CHRIST which strengtheneth me." I can do all things, then surely can keep the commandments. And if St. Paul, then surely we can. But then it may be said, GOD hath indeed written His Law on our hearts by His SPIRIT at Baptism; but most of us have, by wilful sins, in a great measure done away with the marks of God's hand, and His Law written on our heart. But now—if GOD was so full of long-suffering and compassion, that when Moses broke in pieces the tables of stone which He had written, because the people were utterly unworthy of any covenant with God, yet God was pleased to write them again as HE had done before; may we not hope that HE will do the same on our own hearts also? that HE is willing and able *again* to write

⁸ Matt. v. 19.

His Law in our hearts, so that we may indeed fulfil it by loving God and our neighbour as we have never done before.

But then it may be answered, or rather the heart of each will answer to himself, that we do not see this to be the case around : we never expect an angry and passionate man to become meek ; we never expect purity of heart from one who has committed fornication : if a man has been guilty of dishonesty, we never trust him fully afterwards ; we take it for granted that he is still the same ; that is to say, we do not expect God to write the commandments in the heart over again if we have broken them to pieces.

But now this is not the question : it is very true that the generality around us are not what they ought to be ; but this does not alter the promises of God to those who take hold of them. But the matter is this,—has any one, after falling away ever so grievously, ever taken all the means in his power to be restored to God's favour in vain ? What is all the Gospel, but to teach us that God is both able and willing to restore us, if we seek HIM with our whole heart ?

What is the meaning of this prayer, "LORD, have mercy upon me, and incline my heart to keep this law," unless it is founded upon God's unfailing promises, that HE will have mercy on us for the past, and that HE will show this His mercy to us by inclining our hearts to keep it as we have never done before ; that HE will incline our hearts to hate and abhor those sins that we have loved in times past, and to love HIM as we never before have done.

It is very true that we do not find people are usually thus restored ; but it is equally true that we do not find people usually take the means to be restored ; they do not take even the same trouble that they would to recover their bodily health ; and therefore it is not to be expected.

The question is not what others do, it is simply this to each one of us : I have fallen into grievous sin, I have gotten into habits of sin ; is it possible for me to be restored ? Can such a one as I ever love God, and keep His commandments with my whole heart ? To this it must be answered, "All things are possible with God." And HE has also said, "All things are possible to him that believeth." Take all the means in your

power, and have faith in His promises. Never cease praying until HE answers you. If you find you have no heart to pray, then pray for a heart to pray. Take all the means in your power to pray; rise early to pray; fast, in order that you may pray; give alms, to induce God to hear you. Take all the means in your power, and you will find God is true to His promises; yea, more graciously true than any man would believe.

In this, as in all things else, the Israelites in the wilderness are a pattern to us: after all their provocations and wickedness they would not have been shut out of the promised land, had not Satan led them at last to despair, and to cease to love the good things God had promised. The effect of all their wickedness was, that they thought scorn of that pleasant land, they trembled before the great children of Anak, they thought God had left them. Not till then were they cut off.

Now there is no one here present, whatever his past sins may have been, but if he will from henceforth seek God with his whole heart, he will at last find HIM: yea, although a thousand fall beside him, and ten thousand at his right hand, yet he shall be able to go on the lion and adder, and tread under his feet at last all the power of the enemy.

SERMON CCCI.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 3.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before ME.”

It may seem strange that it should be necessary for us to be commanded by ALMIGHTY GOD to have no other gods before HIMSELF, when HE has made us, and without HIM we die. But so it is ever since the fall of our first parents, all religion is to bring us back to this one great and first commandment, “Thou shalt have none other gods but ME.”

This was the commandment broken by Adam and Eve in Paradise. It might be said, in some sense, to be the only commandment given unto them in the garden of Eden: “Thou shalt have no other gods before ME,” which, like the river of Paradise, was afterwards divided into four heads—the four first commandments which contain our duty to God.

They had but this one commandment; and the devil came to them, wishing them to take him for their god, instead of that HEAVENLY FATHER Who had placed them in Paradise; and they too readily obeyed his voice: the woman took the serpent for her god, and obeyed him, and ate of the forbidden fruit at his suggestion; and Adam said, “The woman whom THOU gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat¹.” God had told him not to eat, and the woman told him to eat; and he

¹ Gen. iii. 12.

obeyed her rather than God, as she obeyed the serpent. And since that time the devil has been called the god of this world, and the prince of this world, because men have commonly obeyed him, and hearkened to his voice, and left the gracious God Who made them.

And the whole world was soon given up to worship the great deceiver under the name of false gods, to serve Satan under various names; and then the great God, the MAKER of heaven and earth, singled out one family, and was willing to be called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And for Abraham's sake, who served HIM so faithfully, while all the world was given up to wickedness, HE still kept his seed as His own: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." And again, with fresh mercies HE would be known unto them, saying not only, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but also, "I am the LORD thy God, Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage²." And how very much was there contained in these names by which HE made HIMSELF known to them! for our LORD tells us in the Gospels, that when HE called HIMSELF the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the burning bush, this signified, that if HE was their God, they could never die³. And when HE called HIMSELF that God Who brought them out of Egypt and the house of slavery, this was a token and sign to them of His great goodness; for surely if HE had done so much for them, HE would save them after that from all evil, from the power of the devil and of death, and the bondage of sin.

And yet even this one family and nation, to whom HE revealed HIMSELF, whom HE kept as the apple of His eye, and carried as on eagle's wings to bring them to HIMSELF, were quite as unwilling as the rest of the world to serve HIM alone. This is too evident from all we read of them in the wilderness and in the land of Canaan afterwards; so that it was necessary to declare again, amidst terrible signs, that first and great commandment, "Thou shalt have none other gods but ME;" and even while HE gave this commandment, they were turning aside to other gods. Yet to Moses did HE declare HIMSELF as the same gracious God Who only is good: "The LORD God, merciful and gracious,

² Exod. xx. 2.

³ Matt. xxii. 32.

long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty."

Yet even when they had gone from HIM in their hearts, and HE had given them up to captivity, yet even then among the heathen, wherever there were any that would worship and serve HIM, and have no other gods but HIM, His eye was over them for good, and no torment could touch them, nor any thing by any means harm them.

And one remarkable instance of this has been written for all ages, when the three princes in Babylon stood before Nebuchadnezzar, whom they well knew to be armed with every terror that this world could inflict. But they "feared not men that could kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but they feared HIM Who hath power, after HE hath killed, to cast body and soul into hell." And what was fulfilled in their case was this, not only that they were preserved unhurt from the flames, so that "not a hair of their head was burned," but they had this infinite honour and blessing, that with them, walking in the midst of the flames, was seen the SON of GOD. Thus did HE show HIMSELF, according to His great name, the GOD of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, keeping His covenant; and the GOD Who brought them out of the house of bondage, the fiery furnace of Egypt, and Who had in store, for those who wait for HIM, far greater things than these.

"O Nebuchadnezzar," said they, "we are not careful to answer thee in this matter." They had no fear for the consequences, no anxiety; "we are not careful to answer thee." "If it be so, our GOD whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and HE will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto Thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods⁴."

And an instance no less memorable than this, was that of Daniel when he was cast into the den of lions.

But now it may be asked, why should it be necessary to say, "Thou shalt have no other gods but ME," because we know there is no such thing as any other god at all; we know that we

⁴ Dan. iii. 16—18.

must love HIM with all our heart and soul and strength; but still if we do not, there is no other god we can turn to, nor ever was. For what the heathen called gods were, in fact, nothing at all; they worshipped dead men and dead women, which was, in fact, like worshipping nothing but empty names. Such are those names we read of in Scripture, as Baal and Ashtaroth, and Jupiter and Mercury, and Diana the goddess of the Ephesians. And in like manner, when they worshipped the sun, and moon, and stars, and the earth, and creeping things, it was a mere shadow, and nothing at all. Why therefore should it be said, "Thou shalt have none other gods but ME," when, in fact, there is no such thing as any other god, but the one living and true GOD, the GOD of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? If we do not worship and serve GOD, yet we cannot give His honour to another, for there is no other to give it to.

The reason is this, that all those false gods and false religions are ways in which the devil is worshipped and served; for whenever we fall away from the worship and service of GOD, we fall into his power; we take him for our god. And as long as he can draw away all the world to worship idle names and shadows, his purpose is served; he turns men away from the living and true GOD to "feed upon ashes," to go upon the ground and eat dust like himself, and this is all he wants. He does not dare to show himself in his true shape; but he knows that whenever we turn from GOD, it is him we serve, his power we are under, his wages we are to expect.

And thus to Adam and Eve he did not venture to suggest that they should take him for their master, and serve him, but he tempted them to lust and desire what was forbidden. This is the way in which he gained them into his power. And thus St. Paul speaks of persons, "whose god is their belly," "who mind earthly things⁵." And of others he says, "The god of this world hath blinded their eyes, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of JESUS CHRIST should shine unto them⁶." As long as he can turn away their hearts from the only true GOD, and blind their eyes so that they cannot see their true happiness, Satan has gained his end.

⁵ Phil. iii. 19.

⁶ 2 Cor. iv. 4.

And from this we can see why he is called the god of this world : it is not that he is worshipped or served openly as god by any,—but as in the heathen world, when nations were given up to worship all kinds of false gods, they were, in fact, only deceived by the devil, and serving him,—so is it now ; whatever turns away our hearts from the service of GOD, becomes a god to us ; and that god, although we know it not, is Satan ; and thus our LORD tells us, that they who are taken up with covetousness, are serving mammon ; they take another god instead of the true, and serve him ; it is, in fact, no god at all—nothing that can help or deliver them, but Satan’s usual mode of blinding their eyes.

And it may be observed, that his custom is not to show himself, but to hold forth some apparent pleasure or profit : thus to Adam and Eve he held forth the forbidden fruit, “good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise.”

And in like manner, when he came forward to tempt our blessed SAVIOUR, he made an offer to HIM—not as he does to us of a mere apple, pleasure for an hour or for a day—not the advantage of a few shillings, such as he offers men in making bargains, for he offers to each what he thinks sufficient, and he often finds that a very little will do,—but in this case he offered the whole world if HE would but for once do him service. And then he was in an instant overcome for ever. “Then saith JESUS unto him, Get thee behind ME, Satan ; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the LORD thy GOD, and HIM only shalt thou serve.”

Now it may be observed, that what Satan requires is only, as it were, for once to serve him. So was his temptation to our blessed LORD. So to Adam and Eve, only once to eat of the tree forbidden ; so was it with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—it was once for all to fall down and worship the graven image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up ; so was it with Daniel—it was only to wait for thirty days without praying to GOD, and afterwards he might serve HIM without harm as much as he pleased. So was it with the first Christian martyrs ; all that was required of them was, that they would but for once sacrifice to the heathen gods—only once deny the name of CHRIST. So is it

now that the tempter usually succeeds,—only for to-day, only just at present, only for thirty days, only for this one thing, and afterwards you may be, he says, as religious as you please. This is his usual way of tempting men not to serve the true God. A little ease or pleasure, or a little profit, a little putting off, this is all that he needs ; and this is the reason why so many live and die in his power.

For, on the other hand, GOD requires of us our whole service, “The LORD our GOD is one LORD ; and thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might ⁷.”

“Ye cannot drink the cup of the LORD,” says St. Paul, “and the cup of devils ; ye cannot be partakers of the LORD’s table, and of the table of devils ⁸.”

And our LORD HIMSELF, “Ye cannot serve GOD and Mammon.”

Indeed all men wish to serve GOD in some things ; they are willing to sacrifice to GOD what costs them nothing ; and it may be that in all points but one they are willing to serve HIM. But the fact is, this is no service at all, for their heart is not right towards GOD.

As long as there is any single point in which we are acting contrary to the law of GOD, no other service we can do will be acceptable to HIM. Like the dead fly in the ointment of the apothecary ⁹, so is any thing whatever that is allowed in the heart which is contrary to the love of GOD.

Past sins of impurity, which still leave behind impurity of heart ; acts of dishonesty, or fraud, or wrong, where full restitution has not been made to the best of our power ; angry words and actions, which leave behind unkindness of heart ; these will, no doubt, make all other services no better than hypocrisy in the sight of GOD ; and, if unrepented of, will most certainly shut us out from heaven at last, as unfit to do HIM service and worship.

“Be not deceived,” says the Apostle in speaking of these things, teaching us that we are very likely to deceive ourselves in such things.

⁷ Deut. vi. 4, 5.

⁸ 1 Cor. x. 21.

⁹ Eccles. x. 1.

Nothing is more common than to find persons who have been guilty of notorious sin unrepented of, and even living in known sin, who are at the same time doing apparently good actions, such as seem to be charitable or religious, and yet without amending those points which are against them in God's book.

Now, any signs of goodness, any appearance of returning to God, is very much indeed to be cherished and welcomed: very far indeed be it from us to discourage such actions: but after all, if the things which most need repentance are left unrepented of, any appearance of good in another direction, in other matters, is only a false appearance,—it is not what God requires.

HE would have us unlearn to do evil before we learn to do well; HE would have us to wash and make clean, to put away the evil of our doings from before His eyes, before we think of offering HIM any acceptable service.

If any sudden judgment was to come upon us, we should think of that sin which lies most heavily upon the conscience; this sin would then overtake us and find us out. And this circumstance shows that it is not from ignorance that men leave unrepented what most needs repentance; it is from not being in earnest in seeking God's favour, in not dealing honestly with themselves.

If we have been proud, let us humble ourselves; if we have been angry and uncharitable, let us practise the contrary graces; if we have done wrong to any man, let us restore it without self-deceit; if we have been impure, let us cease not to mortify ourselves, and bewail our uncleanness in the sight of the most Holy God. Until this is done, be assured all our religion will avail us not.

It surely must be some self-deceit of this kind that now prevails, which can alone account for that hardness and blindness of heart with which men so commonly live and die, notwithstanding all the religion that is professed among us.

Men will not turn their eyes to those things that need repentance, but to something else, both in life and in death. And as long as any sin remains unrepented of, the HOLY SPIRIT will not dwell with them, nor soften and humble their hearts. If they would but in earnest repent of those things in their heart and life which most need repentance, then it is likely they would become

in every way very different, and all their other services and endeavours would be accepted of God, and blessed very far beyond what now they think.

Now, all this will explain to us how it is that while God demands our whole undivided heart and service, yet Satan would have us but once worship and serve other gods, because we thus become so polluted in our heart and conscience, as to be unfit to serve God at all.

May God of his great mercy grant that we may become sensible of these things before it is for ever too late; may He open our eyes that we sleep not in death; may He keep us from deceiving ourselves with any thought of half service; from a hollow insincere shadow of repentance; may He of his great goodness make us, if it be necessary, very miserable and unhappy, and unable to find any comfort and peace, until we return to Him with our whole heart. For we shall never find rest but in Him.

SERMON CCCII.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

1 JOHN v. 21.

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”

THESE words occur in a place where we should have very little expected to find them; it seems extraordinary that St. John, so overflowing with Divine love, so full of the Word made flesh, and of the true Light, after saying so much to us of this love and Divine knowledge, should after all, and, as it were, of a sudden, end his Epistle by saying, “Keep yourselves from idols.” For it might be thought, what fear can there be that any one who had heard St. John speak of things so high and heavenly, could ever turn to worship a piece of wood and stone, and “feed on ashes?” Something of this kind often seems to occur to Christians of this country when they are speaking of the Second Commandment; they in their hearts despise those who could make a graven image, and then fall down and worship it; they think that, whatever they may be, they could never be guilty of folly so great as this; and therefore they are inclined almost to set aside this Commandment, as having nothing to do with us.

But in this, as in all other matters, the Bible knows us far better than we know our own hearts; and we may be quite sure that it has some great meaning in holding out to us so strongly this fear of idolatry. St. Paul introduces it in a manner not very unlike that of the text: “My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry;” and he had just before been saying, “Let him that thinketh he

standeth, take heed lest he fall¹.” With this caution, therefore, let us consider this subject; let us on this, as in other things, confess ourselves blind and ignorant, that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;” and so let us put ourselves under the teaching of ALMIGHTY GOD, Who alone truly knows what is in man.

Now, in this commandment there is much more said in the way of exhortation and warning than in either of the others. Here we are especially told of God’s being “a jealous God,” from His requiring the whole of our love to be given to HIMSELF alone; in like manner as St. John, in this passage, when he is dwelling on the love of God, gives us this warning against idols. It is in this commandment that God tells us of His visiting sins to the third and fourth generation, and of His showing mercy unto thousands in them that love HIM.

And of this we have a remarkable instance in the father of the Jewish nation: there has never been any one so remembered by ALMIGHTY GOD, and spoken of for good in after generations, so as to have brought upon his posterity the especial favour and protection of God for ever, as Abraham. HE is especially the God of Abraham for ever. But now the history of Abraham was this, that when all the world fell away to the worship of idols and false gods, Abraham rose up and left his idolatrous kindred, and went into a far country, to worship faithfully the God of Heaven. He endured, as seeing HIM that is invisible. Thus did God “shew mercy unto thousands in them that love HIM.” And His visiting this sin of idolatry “unto the third and fourth generation” is very evident throughout the whole of the history of the Jews. For this HE visited the families of the kings of Israel and Judah; so was it with the family of Jeroboam and of Ahab, and of Jehu who served idols, in the fourth generation was he also cut off². Thus the Edomite and the Egyptian, who worshipped idols, were not allowed to enter into the congregation of Israel till “the third generation³,” and the Ammonite and Moabite not till the tenth. Thus was it for worshipping idols that the kingdom of Israel, and afterwards that of Judah, was so

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 12.

² 2 Kings x. 30.

³ Deut. xxiii. 8. 3.

heavily visited by ALMIGHTY GOD: their country was laid waste, and themselves were carried away.

And as the Second Commandment is more emphatic and onger than the others, (unless it be the fourth,) so also it may be observed, how much there is in the whole of the Bible upon this subject of idolatry. All the history of the children of Israel throughout, is an account of their tendency to fall away, more or less, to the worship of idols; for this reason especially they are kept separate from the rest of the world, who are given up to worship idols; all the Law and the Prophets are full of warnings on this subject; a great part of the Bible which we Christians read is taken up with describing the folly of making graven images and worshipping wood and stone⁴. And in such very strong words is it spoken of, that one expression in the Holy Scriptures which signifies an idol, is "the abomination:" thus we read of "Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites;" "Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites;" "Ashtaroath, the abomination of the Zidonians⁵." Thus in Deuteronomy we read, "The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire lest thou be snared therein; for it is an abomination unto the LORD thy God. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing⁶." Add to which, that the expression applied to those that worship them in the Bible, is, of their being polluted and defiled with idols⁷; of their being in heart "adulterers" against God. And not only in those early times, but even to the end of the Bible, and to the very last chapter, it is the same. "Idolaters," St. John tells us in the Revelation; have their place in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and, together with murderers and adulterers, are shut out of the city of God⁸. And St. Paul repeats more than once, and in various ways, that an idolater hath no inheritance in the kingdom of God⁹.

Now, when we find that all the world have been so much given to worship idols, we may be sure that it arises from some-

⁴ Isa. xlv. Gen. xxxi. 19. Judges xvii. 1 Sam. v. Exod. xxxii.

⁵ 1 Kings xi. 5. 7. 2 Kings xxiii. 13.

⁶ Deut. vii. 25.

⁷ Ezek. xxxvi. xxxvii. ⁸ Rev. xxi. 8; xxii. 15. ⁹ Eph. v. 5. 1 Cor. vi. 9.

thing very natural to the corrupt heart of man. Every body must know that there is a God; and then men being so prone to walk by sight, not by faith, they want something that they may see with their eyes to worship; and the devil, taking advantage of this natural feeling in fallen mankind, leads them to have unworthy thoughts of God, and so to worship himself instead of God. Bad men wish to get rid of the fear of God, and they can only do this by "thinking wickedly that God is even such a one as themselves;" and so they represent HIM by making idols. "When they knew God," says St. Paul, "they glorified HIM not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up¹."

But, now, all this wickedness seems to arise out of this, that ever since man has been cast out from the presence of God in Paradise, he has secretly in himself a natural desire to see God; for he is born for this purpose alone, and yet, in his fallen and sinful state, "no man can see God and live." This desire to see God, Who is our Life, is natural to man; and we find it expressed by good men, and especially in times of great distress and perplexity; of which there are many instances in the book of Job: "O that I knew where I might find HIM! that I might come even to His seat!" "Behold, I go forward, but HE is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive HIM: on the left hand, where HE doth work, but I cannot behold HIM: HE hideth HIMSELF on the right hand, that I cannot see HIM²." And amidst these longing thoughts, he comforts himself by saying, "In my flesh shall I see God; Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold³." Something of the same kind we often find expressed in the Psalms; and in the instance of Moses, also, when he wished to see the glory of God⁴.

It has been, therefore, out of gracious condescension to this our infirmity, and our natural desire to behold with our eyes HIM

¹ Rom. i. 21. 24.

² Job xxiii. 2. 8, 9.

³ Job xix. 26.

⁴ Exod. xxxiii. 18.

Whom we worship, that GOD has been pleased to reveal HIMSELF to us in the flesh, so that we might behold HIM in our own bodily shape : as St. John speaks of HIM “ Which was from the beginning, Which we have heard, Which we have seen with our eyes, Which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled.” So indeed it is now with all Christians, we may indeed say that we have seen GOD, and yet live ; and not only so, but that our life is in HIM, and seeing HIM we live ; we have heard HIM, we have seen HIM with our eyes, we have looked upon HIM, and our hands have handled HIM.

All this hath GOD done in compassion to us, in His most wonderful wisdom, to meet this our natural want ; that we may not be inclined to liken HIM to sinful men, nor forms of wood and stone. And it may be observed, that all those who worshipped GOD by means of idols and images, could so approach HIM without setting aside their sins ; they entirely lost all sense of GOD’s holiness, all fear of His greatness ; they corrupted themselves, and their foolish heart was darkened.

But not so those who approach GOD as manifested in JESUS CHRIST ; on the contrary, of this Job seems to speak in prophecy, when he says, “ I have heard of THEE by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth THEE ; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes ⁵.” And thus St. Peter afterwards, in very deed, when he found that GOD was present in CHRIST, fell down before HIM, saying, “ Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD.”

We Christians, therefore, have far less excuse than those of old for approaching GOD through idols, or likening the incomprehensible and ALMIGHTY GOD, the FATHER of Spirits, to any of His creatures. But still so great is the corruption in the heart of man, and the power of the evil one so subtle, that men have been since devising means to approach GOD without that holiness of heart and life, and that fear and trembling, with which a sinner must approach his MAKER.

There are very many, even to this day, in the Christian world, who (whether the Roman Church does go all those lengths or not, yet assuredly many among her people do) make the blessed

⁵ Job xlii. 5, 6.

Virgin Mary the great object of their worship ; and not only so, but fall down before her images, and also before images of CHRIST ; and treat them, and speak of them, as if, in those images themselves, there was power to save them.

Whether God will be pleased again to restore those foreign Churches, or whether, after so long giving them time to repent, and waiting for their repentance, HE should give them up to the consummation of some still greater wickedness, it is not for us to know. Our whole business is with ourselves ; and that there is great danger in our turning our zeal against others, and not watching over ourselves, is evident from this, that those who have been in former times most zealous in destroying all appearance of idolatry in the Church of Rome, were themselves, at the very same time, guilty of far worse crimes, so as to show to all the world that they were not actuated by the love of God or of man.

Our business is entirely with ourselves. All that has been said must show that we are all in danger of this sin, which human nature has been so very liable to fall into, and against which God, by His word, has so much warned us.

Now, if we turn to any book worthy of attention which explains to us the full meaning of these Ten Commandments, we shall find that they all point out, under this head, the secret sin of idolatry in the heart of us all ; which shows itself in a great number of ways. They all tell us, that not only worshipping the creature instead of the CREATOR, and making representations of God the FATHER, and depending more on Saints and Angels than on CHRIST the MEDIATOR between God and man ; that not only these things which others may do, are breaches of the Second Commandment, but also all ways of worshipping God which indicate that we do not worthily reverence and fear HIM ; all things in worship which show that we do not sufficiently consider His spiritual Presence ; all dishonouring of God in His service, in holy places, and in those Sacraments in which HE comes to us, and allows us to approach HIM.

Such things are “an abomination” unto HIM, and prove that we have “set up idols” in our own hearts, as the prophet Ezekiel speaks ⁶, which we think more of than we do of HIM. All

⁶ Ezek. xiv. 3. 5.

“covetousness, which is idolatry,” all pride and lust, destroy in the heart this reverence for God, and therefore cause men to defile His sanctuary, to pollute His Name and holy place ; inasmuch as, when thus estranged and corrupted, they necessarily show a want of reverence and honour in all things appertaining to the adoration of God.

And this St. Paul tells us ; for in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, where he is warning the Pharisaical Jews, who, while they were condemning and judging the Gentiles, were committing the very same or worse sins under another shape, he adds, “Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal ? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery ? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege ?” Now here St. Paul speaks of their doing exactly the same things of which they accused others ; while they preached against stealing and adultery, they committed it themselves : and so also with regard to idolatry ; he does not say, that they committed idolatry while they preached against it, but sacrilege ; by which he means to say, that sacrilege was not only as bad as the idolatry which the Jews professed to abhor, but that if we come to the root of the matter, it was the very same thing under a different shape : both of them alike were defiling the worship of God, and polluting the Sanctuary. And this our Blessed SAVIOUR HIMSELF showed ; for as in the Old Testament, God declared so much His hatred of idolatry, and zeal against it, so as to cut off and drive from His presence those who were guilty of it ; in the Gospels CHRIST, in like manner, shows His zeal and hatred against sacrilege ; as when, on two occasions, HE drove the buyers and sellers out of the Temple.

For it may be observed, that there was no idolatry among the Jews during the times we read of in the Gospels and New Testament ; they “abhorred idols ;” but yet for all that they were no better than their forefathers, who worshipped idols. That unclean spirit had been cast out of them by the Captivity ; but he was now returning again in another shape, that of sacrilege, with seven other spirits worse than himself ; that is, they had lost all fear of God in religious worship.

Now, this was very remarkable. Other nations, when they became rich, and proud, and fell away from the fear of God,

worshipped idols; and so it had been with the Jews of old, as Isaiah describes them, "Their land is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: their land also is full of idols⁷." But now this could not be said of them in their latter end, for they had no idols; and yet their latter end was worse than their beginning.

Something very like this is the case with us of this nation; it may be said of us, "Their land is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots;" but it cannot be added of us literally, "their land is full of idols." On the contrary, we of this country are used to think that all other nations are guilty of idolatry excepting ourselves; we abhor idols. But it is to be feared that we, more than other times and countries, are guilty of sacrilege. We have idols set up in our own hearts, and therefore, as a nation, we have lost the fear of God; there is little reverence for holy seasons, and holy places, and holy Sacraments; we come before God in our sins, without fear. And this is the very thing which idolatry was of old; men gave up their hearts to corruptible things, and therefore lost the fear of God in His worship.

Thus the state of idolatry, as it is described by Moses, may apply to many among us. "Whose heart turneth away from the LORD our God to go and serve the gods of these nations." "And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart⁸." And the Prophet Ezekiel describes the same persons as coming before God with a show of worship. "Thus saith the LORD GOD, Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols⁹."

We may see, therefore, that the children of Israel at one time fell into idolatries, and their land was full of idols; but at another time, long afterwards, they had no idols at all; but surely when

⁷ Isa. ii. 7, 8.

⁸ Deut. xxix. 19.

⁹ Ezek. xiv. 4.

our LORD HIMSELF said that they made the House of God "an house of merchandize," and "a den of thieves," it was much the same thing as when they polluted it with idols. All that was intended in the second commandment they broke at one time as much as at another; and CHRIST showed, that HE was HIMSELF that "jealous God," by driving them out of His Temple.

Whether or not we are at this time in danger of falling away again to the worship of images or idols, seems beyond what any of us can tell; but of this we may be sure, that we are all in very great danger of breaking this and every commandment of God, and that, without great care and watchfulness, we shall be sure to do so. Careful and watchful we must be each for himself; or else, while we abhor idols, we may fall into sacrilege, and so come to the same sin at last; or else, which is quite as probable, while we affect to abhor sacrilege, we shall fall into idolatry.

We may be sure that there is but one way of keeping the commandment, and that is, by the unfeigned and humble love of God: this alone will keep us from falling either on the right hand or on the left. By loving God as manifested to us in JESUS CHRIST, the only MEDIATOR between God and man; by thinking more and more of His adorable Unseen Presence; by dwelling more and more on His infinite Holiness, and Power, and Wisdom, which no thought of man can conceive or tongue express.

When Moses returned from the mount where he had been with God, both Aaron and the people had corrupted themselves and fallen to idolatry¹: something of this kind may be the case when CHRIST returns from Heaven. And possibly such a time may be now approaching. If such a trial is coming on, no foresight of ours can escape; the most learned are as likely to fall into the snare of the devil as the most ignorant. There is only one safeguard, and that is the love of God: nothing ever kept any man safe but this; the love of God—this is light and life in the dark day.

No disputings, no professions, no joining together, no studying, will keep us safe, but only the humble love of God. The love of God is the only keeping of the commandments. This the Jews

¹ Exod. xxxii.

had not when they fell into idolatry; this they had not when they were given to sacrilege; this those Christians have not who worship idols; this those have not who broke idols and committed sacrilege.

The love of God—this is all in all; and this will make us very watchful and severe with ourselves; very considerate towards the failings of others.

S E R M O N C C C I I I .

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

EZEKIEL xxxvi. 22, 23.

“Thus saith the LORD GOD, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for Mine Own HOLY Name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen whither ye went. And I will sanctify My Great Name.”

THE second commandment spoke rather of the nature of GOD and our thoughts respecting HIM; that we should not liken HIM to any creatures, or worship HIM through idols: but the third speaks only of the Name of GOD and of our tongues: “Thou shalt not take the Name of the LORD thy GOD in vain;” and to this is added the most fearful declaration which was given out from among the thunders of Mount Sinai, “for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain.” He that breaketh this commandment shall not escape, but shall bear his guilt in the sight of GOD; “his sin shall find him out:” and happy is it for him if it overtakes him in this world; for otherwise GOD will not “hold him guiltless” on the Great Day. By night and by day, in life and in death, he shall “bear his iniquity.” Or as it is fearfully declared in the Prophet, “This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth . . . I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of Hosts; and it shall enter into the house of him that sweareth falsely by My Name; and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof¹.”

Now we cannot see ALMIGHTY GOD, we cannot tell what He is; but what we have among us is His Name. And it may be

¹ Zech. v. 4.

observed throughout the whole of the Bible what a very terrible and gracious thing His Name is. His very Name is full of power: it was merely the proclaiming of His awful Name to Moses which was accompanied with such fearful sights in giving out the Law, His Name, "the LORD God, keeping mercy for thousands," "and that will by no means spare the guilty," "And Moses made haste and bowed his head and worshipped²." The Holy City and the Holy Temple is often described as the place which God hath "chosen to set His Name there;" hath "hallowed for His Name;" "the dwelling-place of His Name;" and where "He hath caused His Name to dwell." His very Name is spoken of as a "strong tower³" and a place of refuge; and having power to defend—"The Name of the God of Jacob defend thee." And good men are spoken of as those who fear His Name, and love and know His Name. It was His Name that overcame enemies of old. "I come to thee in the Name of the LORD of Hosts," said David to the Philistine. It was for His "Name's sake" that God so long protected Israel; it was for polluting His Name that He cast them off. His Name only, it is said, doeth wonders. So likewise in the New Testament it is by the Name of GOD and of CHRIST that all things are done: "In My Name," says our LORD, "shall they cast out serpents." "In the Name of JESUS CHRIST rise up and walk," says the Apostle to the lame man⁴; "that wonders may be done by the Name of Thy CHILD JESUS⁵." "Even the devils," said the disciples, "are subject to us through Thy Name⁶." And when men without faith and fear "called over those which had evil spirits the Name of the LORD JESUS," "the evil spirit leaped on them and overcame them and prevailed against them⁷." It was by the Name of CHRIST, by calling over His Name, that miracles were wrought by early Christians, and devils cast out. It was because they would not blaspheme His Name that they died as Martyrs. It is at the Name of JESUS that every knee shall bow, says the Apostle; a custom which our Church also by one of her Canons commands us to observe⁸ in Public Worship.

And as we find throughout the whole of the Scriptures that it is the Name of God which hath such power; and that the dif-

² Exod. xxxiv. 7.

³ Prov. xvi. 10.

⁴ Acts iii. 6.

⁵ Acts iv. 30.

⁶ Luke x. 17.

⁷ Acts xix. 13. 16.

⁸ The 18th Canon.

ference between good and bad men is often spoken of as depending on how they reverence this Great Name: so it may be observed that our salvation does depend upon the Name of God. The command to baptize is "in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST;" and the new birth at Baptism St. Paul describes as "the washing of water by the Word⁹," that is, by the awful Word or Name of the TRINITY. And in the Revelation those who are saved are described as having "His Name" and "His FATHER's Name written on their foreheads¹." "I will write upon him," says CHRIST, "the Name of My God²." There is no salvation in any other Name under Heaven by which we are saved; we "are justified in His Name;" all things are to be done in His Name; any thing given in His Name will be remembered; those that are gathered together in His Name will be heard.

From these considerations we may see why it is that the first petition which we are taught to make in the LORD's Prayer is this, "Hallowed be Thy Name:" every thing in the world, our salvation now and for ever, depends on this above all things; and the sin against this is denounced by the most terrible threat in the Ten Commandments, that he who hallows not His Name will not be guiltless.

Careless men are apt to think, what is a mere Name or Word, even although it be the most holy of all words? But Scripture tells us that the way in which we use this dreadful Name is all in all to us; it is that which we need pray for first and above all things: the very Name hath power, if rightly used, for all good; if not reverentially used, for perdition. It is not used for nothing; if it casts not out evil spirits, the evil spirits will overcome and prevail³.

Now the most obvious breaking of this commandment is profane swearing: but of this very little need be said, for it is evident to all that they who are guilty of this habit neither fear nor love that dreadful Name; and as they can obtain by it no pleasure nor profit, this sin bears on it in a remarkable manner the stamp of the great enemy of God, of whom it is said, that "he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme

⁹ Eph. v. 26.

² Rev. iii. 12.

¹ Rev. xiv. 1; xxii. 4.

³ Acts xix. 13.

His Name⁴.” And to this the words of St. James may be applied, “The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity;” “it defileth the whole body,” “and is set on fire of hell⁵.” And our LORD’s words seem to carry out and explain to us the force of this warning declared on Mount Sinai, that God will not hold such a one guiltless: “I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of Judgment⁶.” Indeed, this is especially one of those sins that go before to judgment, being manifest to all.

But it may be observed on this subject, that our LORD gives us a more strict command than any thing in the Old Testament; for there we read, “Thou shalt not forswear thyself,” “Thou shalt not take the Name of the LORD thy God in vain;” but CHRIST adds, “But I say unto you, Swear not at all⁷.” And this might appear at first sight to be against taking oaths in a court of justice; but it is evident our LORD is not speaking of that from His own example: for when HE was taken before the High Priest and the Elders, “HE kept silence, and answered nothing,” until the High Priest rose up and said, “I adjure THEE by the living God, tell us;” *i. e.*, he put to HIM the greatest oath that could be taken, and to this our LORD answered and confessed HIMSELF the SON of GOD. In like manner through the Scriptures does GOD often bind HIMSELF by an oath, as St. Paul says, “When God made promise to Abraham, because HE could swear by no greater, HE sware by HIMSELF⁸.” And in the Revelation, His angel “swears by HIM that liveth for ever and ever⁹.” And the Patriarchs of old and the Prophets often made vows and oaths which were well pleasing to GOD. And St. Paul also, on very solemn occasions, says, “GOD is my witness;” and, “I say the truth in CHRIST¹,” and, “I call GOD for a record on my soul²,” he says, “An oath for confirmation is an end of all strife³.” What is it, therefore, against which our LORD so solemnly warns us, charging us not to swear by any thing whatever? “I say unto you, Swear not at all; but let your communication be, Yea, yea, Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.” And no doubt His Apostle St. James is speaking of the same

⁴ Rev. xiii. 6.⁵ James iii. 6.⁶ Matt. xii. 36.⁷ Matt. v. 34.⁸ Heb. vi. 13.⁹ Rev. x. 6.¹ Rom. i. 9; ix. 1.² 2 Cor. i. 23.³ Heb. vi. 16.

when he says, "But above all things, my brethren, swear not; neither by Heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation ⁴."

Now, no doubt this means that, in our daily conversation and intercourse with others, we must be extremely careful against making any appeal to God; that we must always speak as in God's presence, with a religious fear; so careful of our words and declarations, that there should be no need of any kind of oath or awful protestation of any of the things of God. "It cometh of evil," says our Lord; it arises from harshness of temper and impatience, or because our words usually are not sufficiently trustworthy; and therefore men appeal to God, forgetting at the moment how very awful an appeal to God is: and all this therefore "cometh of evil;" it is without the fear of God: and we thereby, before we are aware of it, may fall, as St. James says, "into condemnation;" as this commandment declares, "God will not hold" us "guiltless."

How, therefore, are we to keep this commandment "in spirit and in truth," as every commandment must be kept? There can be no doubt that all of us do require care and amendment on this subject: the highest saint that ever has been on earth has to use the Lord's Prayer to the last breath of his life, and therein to pray that he may hallow God's Name, better than he ever before has done. The great difference between Saints and Angels in Heaven, and men on earth, is this, that in Heaven they never mention God's Name without the deepest adoration, fear, and love, because they know what It is: whereas, the very best of men has comparatively very little sense of what he is speaking; and the difference between the best and worst men in the world, consists mainly in the fear with which they think and speak of the Name of God.

The tongue is given to man such as no other creature has upon earth, in order that he may speak of God's honour among men, and speak in praise and prayer to God; and therefore the tongue is called by the Psalmist his "glory," "the best member" that he has. The tongue and the mouth are sure to speak from the abundance of the heart; and therefore our Lord says, "By thy

⁴ James v. 12.

words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." And this HE says when HE is speaking to the Jews of the great danger they are in of speaking against the HOLY GHOST. So that as there is nothing which so shows the state of the heart, there is nothing which we have so much reason to consider as the reverence, or want of reverence and fear, with which we speak of ALMIGHTY GOD.

Now, perhaps none are in greater danger on this subject than the clergy, inasmuch as they have, on account of their office, more than any other class of persons, to speak of GOD. It is in His Name they appear, as sent by HIM; it is to HIM they appeal; it is for HIM they speak; it is in His Name they bless, and administer holy Sacraments and ordinances.

Of the great power of His Name, much has been said; it is full of infinite strength to sanctify, and to bless, and to work wonders, and to save. His Name is, as the Scripture saith, "as ointment poured forth;" "it is sweet as honey to the mouth, yea, sweeter than honey to the throat;" "it is more powerful" than "an army with banners." "The Name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe⁵." It is in the Name of GOD only that any good can be done, and evil men and evil spirits cast out; it is in that great prevailing Name that all prayers are heard: so powerful is that Name, that, when uttered by the lips upon earth, wonderful to say, it reaches the Heaven of Heavens, and changes the purposes of ALMIGHTY GOD towards us. How great, therefore, is his danger who, by his very office as a minister of GOD and steward of His mysteries, has to do all things in that most sacred Name, which no one can use in vain, and be guiltless before GOD! Very great is the blessedness, and great the power for all good, in that most adorable Name; and therefore great the danger, if we come to use that Name without love and reverence.

And so likewise, in all acts of religious worship, we have always need, at all times, to stir up our minds, lest, from want of thought and reflection, we come to use in vain the most holy Name of GOD. "Use not vain repetitions," is our LORD's especial warning respecting prayer, lest even our prayer be turned into sin, and we come to speak without attentive thought, and so

⁵ Prov. xviii. 10.

take in vain the Name of God. This is indeed very important towards obtaining every blessing in this world, and that which is to come. The prayers of different persons avail very differently with God; some are more effectual, and some less; and this depends upon the awe and fear with which they use His Name. A few words in the fear of His Name go infinitely further than long prayers without it.

And this is perhaps the subject chiefly to be considered with regard to this commandment; for if we are thus careful of using God's Name, we shall not fall into those greater sins in which the breach of it is supposed chiefly to consist.

Now, of course, the one great sin of all against which this commandment is directed, is that of taking a false oath or vow to God: and it may be supposed that very little need be said of this; for we have all naturally a great horror of swearing falsely, and few are called upon to take such oaths, or tempted to break them.

But are we so safe in this respect? Is there any oath which can be taken in a human court of justice so solemn and important as that vow which we make in the house of God at our Baptism? or when we confirm that vow in our own persons at Confirmation? Then is that Name of the ever-blessed TRINITY put upon us with some life-giving power which no words or thought of man can equal; then do we have, as it were, the Name of God marked on our foreheads, and we are made citizens of Heaven and sons of God, by virtue and strength of that Name. What vow, then, can equal the vow then made? What taking of God's Name in vain can equal that of those who forget the blessings and privileges, or the duties and responsibilities then undertaken? Surely this vow is so great, that it swallows up in itself all other vows: what vow of temperance, what vow of brotherly love, can equal that vow? On what occasion can the most holy Name be invoked equal to this occasion?

There is also another time which may be spoken of in which this Name of the Three Persons in One God is more than once appealed to at the altar, and that is at the Marriage Service. It is this which makes marriage holy, and gives grace at that time; so that it may become a help towards Heaven, and not take persons further from it. It is not only by adultery, but by many

other ways, that, for want of consideration and the fear of God, this Name is then taken in vain; so that men lose the grace which would then be given towards the regulation of their after-lives; and, of course, by so doing, are not altogether guiltless before God.

These indeed are great occasions, which happen but for once, and cannot be again recovered, if not undertaken in the fear of God; but the vows made at those times may always be remembered, and God's Name glorified in the remembrance of them.

But at all times, and in all places, the Name of God may be hallowed; whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we are commanded to do all "to the glory of God;" and at all events, as St. Peter says, to "sanctify the LORD God in our hearts."

And in doing this there are two points to be considered, which appear in some respects opposed to each other; one is that, as a holy Bishop has explained it, "we never use God's most venerable Name except on solemn, just, and devout occasions;" and then, that we never use it without "some inward act of love and reverence;" that it be not taken in vain; that, in short, we keep silence, taking care that we use not God's Name, either in a wicked worldly way, or for a mere show of religion. And for this reason it is exceedingly desirable that, in speaking or hearing the Name of God, whenever we can do it, that we should pause and consider what God is.

The second point is, that we should endeavour at all times to remember the Name of God, so as to keep up a constant seriousness of mind at the thought of His Presence; and whenever it can be done with humility and decency, to express this in words. Such may, at all events, be done at our meals; for they cannot be blessed and hallowed to us without the Name of God. The first point, therefore, is, that we should set a watch upon our lips, in silence raising our hearts to God, and not venturing to make use of His Name, from the depth and awe of our thoughts concerning Him; that we should be very careful never to use the Name of God without consideration. And the second is, that we should endeavour to speak of God always.

Now, although these appear in some respects contrary to each other, yet they are not so; and both have been the study of good men. Religious persons living together for the purposes of devo-

tion, have been used generally to practise two things; the one is, in all things they do throughout the day, in rising in the morning, in every occupation and at every occurrence, by some expression, and often by some meek action of the body, to show that they remembered they were in God's presence. And the other rule they have observed has been, to spend a great part of the day in silence, by such means to fix more deeply in their minds the thought of God, and to escape those dangers of the tongue,—the idle word, our SAVIOUR speaks of; the jesting which, St. Paul says, is unsuitable to the Christian calling; the deadly poison, the fire kindled of hell, as St. James says,—and all the other evils of the tongue which St. James speaks of, and which renders it unfit for the same tongue to speak God's Name and His praise.

This will serve to show that there are two things which good men have desired; the one, that their words might be few, so that they might never speak amiss or in vain of God; and the other, that they might at all times remember HIM, and show their sense of His presence by word and deed.

Certainly, many of us are quite unfit to speak the Name of God at all, or to make mention of His Name with our lips; for "praise," it is said, "is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner⁶," and "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD⁷." But even sinners such as we may give glory unto God and honour His Great Name "by confessing our sins," if we do so sincerely, and are not even in so doing taking His Name in vain, and adding sin to sin. "Give, I pray thee, glory unto the LORD," said Joshua unto Achan, "and make confession unto HIM⁸."

Yea, even praying to HIM in our troubles will lead to the glory of His Great Name. "Pay thy vows unto the MOST HIGH," says the Psalmist, "and call upon ME in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify ME⁹."

Yes, it is in the power even of poor creatures such as we to glorify His Great Name; we cannot see HIM, in this wicked world, we cannot know what HE is; for HE is infinitely too high and holy for sinful creatures to know or behold. But His Name, His Great Name, this we have, this we may love and honour.

⁶ Eccclus. xv. 9.⁷ Prov. xv. 8.⁸ Josh. vii. 19.⁹ Psalm l. 15.

SERMON CCCIV.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

ISAIAH lviii. 13, 14.

“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour HIM, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD.”

THERE are some points of great difficulty respecting the Fourth Commandment; and wherever there is any difficulty in Scripture, we may be sure that it is intended to draw our attentive consideration to it, as a matter of great importance and profit.

In the first place we are commanded to keep holy the seventh day; but yet we do not think it necessary to keep the seventh day holy; for the seventh day is Saturday. It may be said that we keep the first day instead; but then surely this is not the same thing; the first day cannot be the seventh day: and where are we told in Scripture that we are to keep the first day at all? We are commanded to keep the seventh; but we are no where commanded to keep the first day.

There is another difficulty on this subject: we Christians, in considering each of the commandments, turn to what our LORD says in explanation of them; for in the Sermon on the Mount HE says, that “not one jot or tittle of the Law shall fail,” that HE has come “not to destroy, but to fulfil, the Law;” and then HE shows in the instances of the sixth, seventh, and third commandments, how HE will require them to be fulfilled by Chris-

tians, not in the letter only, but in the spirit, in the heart and thoughts, far more strictly than the Jews thought it necessary. We therefore conclude, that no doubt, with respect to the fourth commandment also, HE will require it to be observed far more strictly and more carefully fulfilled by us, who have the HOLY SPIRIT given us, than ever it was done in the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. And, therefore, as in the case of all the other Ten Commandments, so in this also, we search out through the Gospels all our LORD said and did respecting it. But to our surprise we cannot find that our LORD any where insists on our observing so very strictly the Sabbath day, either by word or deed; on the contrary, HE not only says nothing about it, but the great charge made against HIM by the Jews was, that HE was a breaker of the Sabbath. "This MAN is not of God," said some of the Pharisees, "because HE keepeth not the Sabbath day¹." And our Blessed LORD, who wished to avoid persecution, and surely would not have offended them needlessly, yet notwithstanding this charge against HIM, HE seemed particularly to select the Sabbath day for working His miracles. And not only this, but although we find that HE often endeavoured to conceal His miracles, telling persons not to make them known and the like, yet on the Sabbath HE seemed to court attention, if we may so speak, to His *works*; and performed them in the most public places,—in the synagogue, and at Jerusalem in the Feast. Thus HE told the man with the withered hand to stand out in the Synagogue², in order that they might see what HE was going to do. And on another occasion, a man with the dropsy HE healed on the Sabbath day in the house of a Pharisee³, when His enemies were watching HIM. And not only this, but whereas in the prophet Jeremiah GOD HIMSELF commands⁴ that they should "bear no burden on the Sabbath day;" and Nehemiah speaks of it among his good deeds that he would "have no burden brought in on the Sabbath day⁵;" yet our Blessed LORD, as if on purpose, before all the Jews told the man whom HE healed to carry his bed on the Sabbath day⁶. And HE HIMSELF also seemed to take trouble in working His miracles on the Sabbath day,

¹ John ix. 16.² Matt. xii. 9.³ Luke xiv. 1.⁴ Jer. xviii. 21.⁵ Nehem. xiii. 19.⁶ John v. 8. 10.

when HE might have performed them without any by only speaking a word. "It was the Sabbath day," we read, "when JESUS made the clay, and opened his eyes⁷." HE seems especially to have been doing works on the Sabbath day.

Here, therefore, are two great difficulties on this subject which require to be explained; first, how it is that the observance of the seventh day is done away with, although there is no warrant in Holy Scripture for doing so. Secondly, how it is that our MOST HOLY LORD does not call upon us for that strict keeping of rest upon His holy Day which the Old Testament so much enjoins.

The reason why we keep the first day of the week holy instead of the seventh is for the same reason that we observe many other things, not because the Bible, but because the Church, has enjoined it. No other reason can be given for this than that for which we hold the Apostles' Creed, and have the three Orders of Ministers and the like; not that we are commanded in Scripture, but that the Church has done so from the beginning. It is because every Church in the world was found to do so in early times, and therefore we are sure that the Apostles themselves must have so appointed it; and as our LORD was HIMSELF for forty days speaking to the Apostles of the things pertaining to the government of His Church, we may conclude that HE HIMSELF must have directed them to make this change. And we may observe that in this, as in other matters which we receive from the Church, we find the confirmation of the truth and certainty of them in the Scriptures, as St. Luke says at the beginning of his Gospel, "That thou mayest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed," *i. e.*, already instructed by the Church in things not written.

Thus we find that our LORD appeared to His disciples on Easter Sunday, but did not appear again till they were gathered together eight days after, *i. e.*, on the following Sunday. And in the Revelation St. John says that he was "in the Spirit on the LORD's day" when CHRIST appeared to him. And in the Acts we read, "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread⁸." And as if this was even at

⁷. John ix. 14.

⁸ Acts xx. 7.

that time not only the great day for the Holy Communion, but also for collecting alms at such assemblings, St. Paul says to the Corinthians⁹, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him."

And surely we Christians may see the reason for our keeping this day far more than any other day, inasmuch as it is the first of all days, the first day of the Old Creation, and the first day of the New in CHRIST; as on this day CHRIST rose from the grave. On this day, the first day in the beginning, the Light was created; on this day, the first of days, CHRIST the true Light, the Sun of Righteousness, arose from the grave; on this day the HOLY SPIRIT came down, the true illumination, to fill the New Creation with the Light of God. This day, therefore, is, beyond all days, the day of our MAKER, the day of our REDEEMER, the day of our SANCTIFIER. On the seventh day, indeed, GOD rested from His works, on the seventh day CHRIST rested in the grave: but on the first day GOD laid the foundations of the new Heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of GOD shouted for joy. And the seventh day, we are told, was kept by the Jews, because on this day GOD brought them out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage¹. But what is that to us? Much greater reason have we Christians to *remember* the first day to keep it holy, because on this day GOD brought us out of the more than Egyptian darkness of this world, and the house of bondage of sin, into His marvellous Light and the true liberty of the children of GOD.

And for this reason it may be observed that "*rest*" is not so much the character of the Christian Sunday as "*love*." The Jewish Sabbath was kept by "*rest*" because it was to commemorate the rest of GOD on the seventh day: but the first day, our LORD's day, is the day of light, and light is love, love of GOD and love of man. And this will explain to us the reason of our Blessed LORD's conduct on this subject. For HE drew our attention especially to works of *love*, and set aside the consideration of *rest*. HE seemed to show that HE was going to do away with the Jewish Sabbath, the Sabbath of rest, to bring in

⁹ 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

¹ Deut. v. 15.

His own great day of "faith working by love." And thus when the Jews accused HIM of breaking the Sabbath, HE said with respect to it, "My FATHER worketh hitherto and I work²," to show that in one sense GOD was not to be considered as at rest, but still at work, in us and for us, and with us in love. And HE declared to them that HE had come with full power to do away with that Sabbath of the Jews, saying, "Therefore the SON of MAN hath power over the Sabbath." And for this reason, in order especially to teach us, in spite of the persecution of the Jews on that account, HE kept performing especially miracles of love and mercy on what was considered the great and holy day of GOD.

And thus, as our LORD taught us that the rest of GOD is not yet come, for HE and His FATHER are still working; so St. Paul also, in speaking of the Sabbath, says it is not yet come, but adds, "there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of GOD," or it might be translated, "a keeping of the Sabbath," for Sabbath means rest.

What then, it may be asked, is signified to us by the Jewish Sabbath? The Sabbath of the Jews may, indeed, be considered as in a manner dead to us, together with CHRIST's Body, laid in the grave, together with that Law whereby CHRIST was slain. And therefore St. Paul, in speaking of the festivals of the Law which were abolished, speaks of the Sabbath day as among them, saying, "Let no man judge you in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of CHRIST³."

The Sabbath of the Jews not only consisted of the seventh day, but also of the seventh year⁴; as every seventh day, so also every seventh year was a year of rest; and still more so seven times seven, for the fiftieth year, or the end of seven times seven, was the Year of Release, and might be called the Great Sabbath Year or the Sabbath of Sabbaths. And the first time when our LORD opened the Gospel of the Kingdom in the synagogue at Nazareth, HE read from the Prophet Esaias an account of this Great Year of Release, wherein it spoke of healing the broken-hearted, deliverance to the captive, and those that are bruised

² John v. 17.³ Col. i. 17.⁴ See Levit. xxv.

being set at liberty, and of proclaiming the acceptable year of the LORD. And to this HE added, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears ⁵."

From this it is evident, that all that was signified by the Sabbaths of the Jews, was the coming of CHRIST; CHRIST was HIMSELF the great Sabbath, in whom His people find rest: "Come unto Me," HE said, "ye that labour, and ye shall find rest for your souls." And something of this kind was understood by the Jews themselves; for the Sabbath was supposed to signify that rest of Canaan into which they were taken by Joshua, and of which GOD said that they should not enter into His rest; that, through unbelief, they entered not into that rest; speaking of which, St. Paul says that there remained a higher and better rest for the people of GOD.

The great Sabbath, then, which was signified of old, came in with CHRIST: HE is our Sabbath, HE is our rest at all times; and therefore it is intended that the whole life of a Christian should be a Sabbath. The Jews were commanded to give a tenth part of all their substance, and a seventh part of their time, to GOD: but the Christian is required so to use all his goods, that they may be devoted to GOD; for our SAVIOUR called on His followers to give up every thing to follow HIM, and have treasure in Heaven. The first Christians sold all their goods, and gave them to GOD; not like the Jews, a tenth part. And so also with regard to his time; it is not a seventh only that GOD requires of the Christian, but the whole of it. HE requires the whole of his heart; and with the whole of his heart, the whole of his time also; that every thing whatever that he does at all times, should be done in the love of GOD; and so that he should find rest,—a perpetual Sabbath of the soul in CHRIST. And this was foretold in the Prophet Isaiah, "From one Sabbath to another shall all flesh come to worship ⁶."

It is, indeed, too true that it is not so with Christians; in the same manner that the Jews of old did not enter into the rest of GOD, because of unbelief; and as afterwards, when in the promised land they did not keep His Sabbaths, so now it is not to be wondered at that Christians do not find the Christian religion

⁵ Luke iv. 21. Isaiah lxi. 1.

⁶ Isaiah lxvi. 23.

to be one great Sabbath; which no doubt God has intended they should do, and which it is, indeed, very possible to make it; and if the heart was right, it would be. For it may be observed, that every Christian is very well able, by God's grace, to make the whole of his time one Sabbath, and spend it in the same way that God required the Jews to keep the seventh day. For this is the fulfilment to which the Prophet Isaiah called the Jews; "from doing their own pleasure on His holy day: that they should call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; that they should honour Him, not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words: then shalt thou delight thyself," it is added, "in the LORD⁷."

Now, all this is exactly what is required of the Christian at all times; he is commanded to take up his cross daily, not to be doing his own ways, nor finding his own pleasure, nor speaking his own words at any time; but whether he eat, or drink, or whatever he does, to do all to the glory of God. To delight himself in the LORD always: "Rejoice in the LORD always," says St. Paul; "and again I say, Rejoice."

In all stations of life, whether servants or masters, or whatever they do, men are commanded to do all "in singleness of heart, as unto CHRIST;" "doing service as to the LORD, and not to men."

Now, it is indeed very necessary for us to be engaged in our worldly callings, whether Christians or not; it is in them, and not in giving them up, that we are required to serve CHRIST: it is Christianity that makes these things holy, if they are carried on in the love of God, and made a daily sacrifice to Him. If the treasure is in Heaven, the heart will be there also: if a Christian were what he should be, he would always be dead and buried with CHRIST; thus would the Jewish Sabbath be in him fulfilled; he would have always joy in the HOLY GHOST, and find rest in CHRIST amidst all the troubles of this life; and therefore even this present state would be to him a continual Sabbath, into which he would enter by faith, as the Jews did into Canaan of old; and this would be but a foretaste and earnest of that rest which hereafter remaineth for the people of God.

This it is which the Jewish Sabbath signifies to us, and thus is

⁷ Isaiah lviii. 13

it fulfilled to us. The LORD's day is not, properly speaking, the Sabbath; for the Sabbath is the seventh day, or Saturday. The LORD's day was never called the Sabbath until comparatively of late years; in ancient books the Sabbath always means Saturday. In some sense, indeed, the LORD's day may be called a Sabbath, by a sort of figure, as it may be termed the Christian Sabbath, the great holy day, or day of the LORD; it is no doubt a day of rest and peace, and therefore, in that sense, a Sabbath; but not the same as that of old, literally.

But if that old Sabbath, which was but a shadow of good things to come, signifies so much to a Christian, and is to be entirely fulfilled in him, not after the letter, but in spirit and in truth, how much more to him is the LORD's day?

The LORD's day is as much above the Judaical Sabbath as Heaven is above earth, as the new creation is superior to the old creation, as heavenly promises are above earthly promises. This is indeed the "day of days;" and as it was the first day of the old creation, so is it also the first day of the new creation, and the forerunner of that great day of the LORD when the light shall break in upon this world, and all things shall be made manifest by the presence of CHRIST. This is the day, says Scripture, which the LORD hath made,—*i. e.* which is especially His day,—we will rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the day when especially the Christian is to be risen with CHRIST, so as to forget all earthly things, the things which are behind, and to press forward to those that are before. One day in seven does God hallow for ever to an especial remembrance of HIMSELF, in compassion to our weak minds, who, while we are in the flesh, are incapable of a constant contemplation of HIM: one day we may set aside all our infirmities and miseries, forgetting what we are in ourselves, and remembering what we are in God. On this day the light and joy of our minds, which CHRIST brought from the grave on this day, may cover all things. The light of Sunday is not like the light of any other day, the earth itself seems nearer Heaven. And those blessed angels and spirits of God who sang on the creation of the world, much more keep in memory this Day; and we also, in prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving, may join the same.

If we cannot at all times feel sensible joy at the presence of

CHRIST, yet on one day in the interval of seven we may well do so. It is very remarkable, that for the other six days in the week, when HE had risen from the dead, CHRIST does not appear to have manifested HIMSELF at all to His disciples; but on the first day and the eighth day, that is to say, on the two first Sundays, HE did; thereby to teach us, no doubt, that this will be the Day when most of all HE will come to be with us.

Early was it on this morning, while it was yet dark, that Mary Magdalene arose to seek CHRIST; let us also on this Day especially be beforehand with the sun of this world, seeking for the SUN of RIGHTEOUSNESS; for they who "seek HIM early shall find HIM," and on them will HE "arise with healing in His wings." But that we may not come before HIM without reverence and care, let us, with Mary Magdalene, be prepared over night, and be early on the Sunday morning to make the most of this blessed Day. The week will not be the worse with us for doing so. Shall we not be as early at the call of a Heavenly Master as we are at the business of an earthly one?

On this Day the two disciples going to Emmaus were talking of CHRIST as they walked by the way, and CHRIST came and walked with them, and their hearts burned within them as HE talked with them, and opened unto them the Scriptures. Let our conversation also as we walk the way be of CHRIST, that HE may be with us, and our hearts burn within us at the thoughts of His love. On this Day, like those two disciples, let us constrain HIM to abide with us: and blessed indeed will be our privilege if on this Day HE will make HIMSELF known to us also in breaking of Bread! Early in the morning let us seek HIM; late at night let us constrain HIM to come in and make His abode with us. Let us on this Day especially never "forsake the assembling of ourselves together;" for it was to His disciples assembled together on this Day that CHRIST vouchsafed to appear: and while they were thus assembled together "with one accord in one place," the HOLY GHOST came down upon them on this Day.

On this Day St. John was in the Spirit, and CHRIST manifested HIMSELF to him, and revealed to him the future things of His kingdom: let us also so live that we may ever be in the Spirit on the LORD'S day,—that we may be able on that day to look

forward to the glory that shall be revealed, and the coming in of the Everlasting Light.

The LORD's day has always been considered by the Church as a day of Heavenly joy and thanksgiving; but then the Church at the same time has kept other holy days: it teaches us all day long on Friday to consider CHRIST crucified, and to mortify ourselves by fasting and prayer; and on Sunday to be risen with HIM. But they only can be risen with CHRIST who also die with HIM; and they only can make Sunday like an Easter day throughout the year who make every Friday like a Good Friday, full of the memory of CHRIST's Passion. If we are content to be like the Jews, and think it enough to give up only one day in the week to religion, then that day must be like the Jews' Sabbath, a day of painful constraint to afflict our souls.

But if we do sincerely endeavour to be as Christians, and to give up ourselves entirely to God in all that we do, as CHRIST requires of us,—not doing our own will, but His will at all times,—then we shall know what a Christian's LORD's day ought to be; and shall feel something like the disciples did on that first LORD's day when they said, "CHRIST is risen indeed, and hath appeared."

Yea, even more than this, we shall hear the still small Voice of CHRIST speaking to us as to St. John, when he was in the Spirit on the LORD's day, and saying, "I am HE that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore."

This it is which the Christian Sunday is to teach us, that CHRIST is risen and liveth for evermore.

HE that was dead is now alive: that old Sabbath of the Jews which was dead in CHRIST, is now alive again in the Christian Sabbath, and shall be alive for evermore,—a Sabbath of light and love, increasing ever more and more unto the Perfect Day.

SERMON CCCV.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

DEUT. v. 16.

“Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

THE Fifth Commandment is thus explained by the Catechism: “To love, honour, and succour my father and mother: to honour and obey the Queen, and all that are put in authority under her: to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters: to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters.”

From this we learn that this commandment speaks not only to children, and to those who have natural parents, but to us all; for we all of us have some persons set over us by the LORD: in all ages and states of life we have to fulfil this great duty, and may obtain the blessings attached to it. And we may also perceive from this, that all those numerous commandments scattered throughout the whole of the Scriptures, of showing honour and obedience to kings, and ministers, and masters, are all the unfolding and enforcing of this great commandment, which is the first and chief of all duties we owe to our neighbour.

Thus we find throughout the Law that this commandment was put forth as the great foundation on which others were built. On him “that setteth light by his father or his mother¹” was

¹ Deut. xxvii. 16.

one of the curses pronounced on Mount Ebal: and it was commanded, "He that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death²."

But we find that David applies the same also to kings, saying, when Saul was in his power, in the cave at En-gedi, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD³." And the Amalekite who slew Saul at his own request he ordered immediately to be put to death, saying, "How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD's anointed⁴?" The expression here used of the LORD's anointed will show us what is the reason of this command being put so strongly in all its shapes: "the LORD's Anointed" is the very name of CHRIST, and we are thus taught that such persons in authority stand to us in the place of CHRIST HIMSELF. GOD HIMSELF wishes to be looked upon by us as a Father, and as a Master, and a King: and also that we should look upon all these persons thus set over us as standing, as it were, in some sense, in His place. Thus as kings are spoken of in Scripture as GOD's anointed, *i. e.* as shadows or figures of CHRIST HIMSELF, or the GREAT ANOINTED of GOD; so St. Paul, after speaking of the duties of children to their parents, proceeds to speak also of servants and masters, and dwells particularly on this point, that honour and obedience to them is honour and obedience unto GOD. This he keeps repeating: "Be obedient," he says, "to your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto CHRIST; not as men-pleasers, but as the servants of CHRIST, doing service with good will as to the LORD, and not to men." We are taught that duty to parents is the first and best offering we can make to GOD. Our LORD strongly condemned the Pharisees, who taught that it was better to make an offering to GOD, than to requite one's parents. And St. Paul, of those who would neglect these duties from the plea of serving GOD, says, "Let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents; for this is good and acceptable before GOD." "But if any provide not for his own . . . he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

² Exod. xxi. 15.

³ 1 Sam. xxiv. 6.

⁴ 2 Sam. i. 14.

And with regard to spiritual pastors, our LORD HIMSELF says, "He that despiseth you despiseth ME; and he that despiseth ME despiseth HIM that sent ME⁵." And thus in the Old Testament God and His servants are put together: "The people feared the LORD and His servant Moses:" "They spake against God and against Moses:" "The people feared the LORD and Samuel." And hence so many heavy judgments recorded, as on Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Hence the leprosy of Miriam, and of king Uzziah afterwards for invading the priest's office⁶: and the kingdom taken away from Saul, for putting himself in the place of Samuel, the Prophet and Priest of God⁷.

But this commandment, it may be observed, is peculiar in this, that, as St. Paul says, it is "the first commandment with promise⁸:" "length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour⁹:" "that it may be well with thee:" and "that thy days may be long in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." Now this was first of all spoken to the Jews with respect to the land of Canaan, that their continuance and their prosperity therein would consist in their observance of this commandment, in honouring their parents; and we may suppose that with this also was implied their having due regard and observance to their father Abraham, for whose sake they were blessed; and to Moses and the ordinances he had given them. And when their days were being cut short in that land which was on the point of being taken from them, God drew their attention in a very remarkable manner to this commandment, as we read in the thirty-fifth chapter of Jeremiah. The Israelites seemed as firmly fixed in their land as any people might appear to have been: they had houses, and walled cities, and strongholds, and armies to defend them: but there were a people among them who had nothing of this kind, "who had neither houses, nor vineyard, nor field;" but they had this "strong tower," and a strength better than that of walls, and bulwarks, or armies, that they kept the Fifth Commandment. And therefore when the Prophet declared the destruction of the Israelites, at the very same time he was commissioned to bear this blessing

⁵ Luke x. 16.⁶ 2 Chron. xxvi. 18.⁷ 1 Sam. xiii. 8.⁸ Eph. vi. 2.⁹ Prov. iii. 16.

to the Rechabites. "And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel : Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you : therefore thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel : Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before ME for ever."

And it has been commonly observed, in the history of the world, that those nations who have paid most respect to parents have continued to exist the longest ; so that this promise, of length of days in the land which God gives, does not only bring this blessing to individuals who keep this commandment, but also to whole nations. And so is it with Churches ; those who have most honoured their parents and fathers in God from age to age have this promise of continuance fulfilled in them. Those bodies of Christians which spring up from time to time of their own accord, without regard to this principle, soon pass away, and to all of them after a time may be applied the expression of the Psalmist, "I myself have seen him in great power ; and flourishing like a green bay-tree. I went by, and lo, he was gone ; I sought him, but his place could nowhere be found."

But now the keeping of this commandment implies and produces a certain temper of mind, which we call meekness. Those who regard not riches are called "poor in spirit;" they who have no proud thoughts are called humble ; but the meek are especially those who keep this commandment. And to these CHRIST has given this one peculiar blessing and privilege, "Blessed are the meek ; for they shall inherit the earth." This cannot mean that the meek shall obtain the riches and honours of this world, for CHRIST declares such things to be evil and not good to His faithful followers ; but that they shall have for their portion that which riches cannot buy, the very highest gift which this world can afford, viz. peace of mind. For our LORD in this place seems to allude to the words of that Psalm which we have just referred to ; "Thou shalt look after his place, and he shall be away," says the Psalmist of the disobedient ; "but the meek-spirited shall possess the earth ; and shall be refreshed in the multitude of peace¹."

¹ Psalm xxxvii. 10, 11.

So far as any thing like peace can be obtained in this world, it can only be obtained by keeping this commandment, by obedience, —obedience to God; and this cannot be shown but by obedience to all those whom HE has placed over us. And what is of far more importance than any peace in this world, that such is but a pledge of that better inheritance which God has promised to them that love HIM.

The promise made to Israel in the wilderness was length of days in the land which God should give them; to them indeed this was but an earthly Canaan, but to us the land which God gives is an Heavenly Canaan. Moses who led them into that inheritance was the meekest of all men, in order to show them what was the temper which God required for that inheritance; and HE Who is our Lawgiver and Guide into our Heavenly inheritance, HE of Whom it is said especially that the earth shall be given HIM for His inheritance, hath said, “Learn of ME, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls:”—rest now, and a better rest hereafter; rest in either case, and continuance in that land which God shall give. It is explaining more clearly the expression of the Psalmist, that the meek “shall be refreshed in the multitude of peace.”

For this reason also, Solomon, who was the builder of the Temple of Israel, and whose name is Peace, or Peaceable, was of all the children of David the one who most showed honour to his parents; while they who did not were cut off. And in the book of Proverbs, which he has left, nothing is so remarkable and striking as the many places in which he speaks of honouring parents. “My son,” he repeats, “hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck².” And again of the same, “Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee³.”

This temper of obedience being, therefore, the very foundation of all true piety, God has so appointed it that all men should be all their lives in conditions of life to exercise and practise this habit of mind: first of all as children under parents, then as

² Prov. i. 8, 9.

³ Prov. vi. 21, 22.

servants under masters, as subjects under kings, as all under spiritual pastors ; and spiritual pastors under their superiors. And there can be no doubt but that he who is the best child to his earthly parents, most loyal to his king, most regardful of those set over him in the LORD, will be the most dutiful also to his Heavenly FATHER, the KING of Kings, the High Priest and Bishop of our souls.

And it may be observed, that it is in this temper, above all, that CHRIST has set HIMSELF before us as our pattern, that of meekness. This meekness is shown in His obedience even as a child ; whether HE did any miracles or mighty works as a child or not, and in what way even then HE showed His Divine Wisdom and Holiness, is not told us. How often and when HE prayed ; what HE said of GOD, and of Heaven, and of Heavenly things, while HE lived as a child and as a youth at Nazareth, are not told us. Nothing is said of all those His words and actions, which were more worthy of record than all the books that ever were written : but one thing is told us of HIM,—that HE was subject unto His parents. “HE went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.” This therefore is the one point above all that we are to imitate and to contemplate in our LORD’s childhood and youth. And this one thing is enough for us.

Does any one think that he is wiser than his parents, and knows the world and all things better than they, being better instructed, and that therefore he need not show them honour and obedience ? Surely, the GOD of Heaven and earth knew all things infinitely better than His poor father and mother, and yet HE was subject to them.

Or, does any one suppose himself holier and better than his parents ; and therefore is inclined to set aside the obedience due to them under the plea of serving GOD ? Yet he cannot think himself as much better than they, as CHRIST was more holy than His reputed father and mother, and yet HE was subject to them.

Or, is he ashamed of his parents’ condition in life, or of their natural infirmities and disorders ? CHRIST was willingly subject to a poor carpenter in an obscure village ; so much so as even to have worked with him, it is supposed, at his trade. HE alone without sin was subject to sinful parents.

Or, if a person has none who are truly his parents to be subject to, yet let him not think but the same honour is due to those who stand to him in the place of parents, as step-fathers, or guardians, and governors; for it was not to one who was truly His father that CHRIST was thus subject, but to His reputed father.

All this, indeed, is saying very little of what must be the thoughts of every Christian, when he considers what it is for the ALMIGHTY to have been thus subject to His own creatures, whom HE HIMSELF had made and daily preserved in life, in order to set before us an example that we may follow His steps.

But all this is sufficient to show that there can be no excuse whatever for any one not paying all honour and obedience to his parents under all circumstances; the perfect pattern and entire subjection of CHRIST HIMSELF must stop every excuse that can arise in the proud heart of man.

And this consideration is especially needful for us in these times; for in a corrupt age it is, of course, most likely that those who are set over us are not what they should be; and whatever we may be ourselves, we are always much alive to the faults of others.

The salvation of very many children among us does depend on their being as unlike their parents as possible. Some born out of wedlock, or, what in the sight of God is much the same thing, born soon after marriage, who must bear about their parents' disgrace until their dying day: and their example eating into their hearts like a canker, or the worm that never dieth. Now, certainly, the trial on such children is very great, to honour those who have dishonoured their children, who dishonour themselves and dishonour God; yet still it is most needful. Other children, again, brought up in entire neglect of all religion; they know of no private prayer, and of no family prayer; they know well that their parents do not come to Church, unless it be on Sunday afternoons; and often not then. Others, again, brought up in the midst of such language that their very hearts and tongues are defiled even in what is considered the age of innocency: as these children come, year by year, to find what their parents

have made them, it requires all the weight of Holy Scripture to teach them to honour and obey them.

Others, again, see that their parents show no honour and obedience themselves to their own superiors in Church and State, and teach the contrary, being filled with notions of what is called liberty, but which really signifies pride and disobedience. Now here it is difficult to honour and obey those parents who maintain that dishonour and disobedience, to all whom God has set over them, is a duty.

In numberless other ways, all the good that can be taught children at Church and in school can have very little weight against the constant bad example which they daily see at home. The difficulty, therefore, is much increased in such cases of keeping the Fifth Commandment.

But what can be said to such children? they cannot but know that their parents are going the broad way to ruin which the many travel; but they know also, that they themselves must travel that narrow way that leadeth unto life, which there are few that find. The more difficult it is to pay this honour and obedience, the more sure may they be that it is the narrow way to life; and the strait and difficult gate whereby they must enter. We must say to them as our Lord did to the Jews concerning the Pharisees, their spiritual superiors; "Whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but do not ye after their works."

To such children we must say, that these circumstances of difficulty in which they are placed are known intimately to ALMIGHTY GOD, Who is with them in all their trials and infirmities: and more than this, that these very circumstances are His own ordering and appointment; as the very best state of things that could be devised for them; and that HE does, notwithstanding, require of them this honour and obedience to their parents, as the most acceptable offering which they can make to HIMSELF.

That it is very highly probable that their salvation does depend upon this more than upon any thing else in the world; that all the trials of their future life will be far more easy to them if this duty is now fulfilled; if they are obedient children, they will be

loyal subjects and faithful Christians; they will enter thereby into the true inheritance of God's children, and obtain for their whole lives that peace which passeth all understanding; the treasure hid in a field; the pearl of great price. For all these are, no doubt, found in obedience.

They may be told that in this duty, beyond all others, they will find comfort for after-years, when their parents are dead and gone: whereas nothing will so much haunt them, and disturb their consciences all their lives, and plant thorns into their dying pillows, as the remembrance of dishonouring their parents. Add to which, that true love is very blind to sins and infirmities of others whom we are bound to respect, and therefore makes these duties much easier. True love and honour will cover and turn away its eyes from such sins and infirmities. For this reason there is a blessing even unto this day on the children of Shem and Japheth, and a curse on the descendants of Ham.

But there is another consideration beyond all, which arises from the due fulfilment of this duty, even in those unhappy cases which we have mentioned. When persons are grown old and hardened in sin, they will sometimes be moved at the thought of their children, and of eternally ruining by their example those whom they have brought into being.

And so likewise, and much more, may the tender minds of young people be moved by the hope of saving their parents, by showing them all honour and obedience, and walking in the fear of God. This is very probably the last and great effort which God out of His long-suffering and infinite compassion makes with the hardened hearts of old sinners. There are some affecting incidents known of the wonderful effects wrought by God's grace through these means. Innocent children have found access into a heart where Satan had long made his stronghold, and seemed now secure of his own. The piety of a little child has touched the conscience, and opened the fountain of tears, when it has appeared dried up by the fiery blasts of the world. Silent example and a few words will sometimes do far more in such cases than much preaching. "Though they obey not the word," yet "without the word they may be won, while they behold a meek" and loving "conversation coupled with fear." Thus indeed may the hearts of parents be won by their children, and

children also by their parents. There is now much talk of schools; but this is a matter of much more importance, without which schools can do no good, *i. e.* the home-piety of parents and children. One great mark of the evil days is that men shall be “without natural affection,” “disobedient to parents.” On the contrary, the best preparation for CHRIST’s coming will be found in men showing piety at home, in coming back to that great mark of the Father of the faithful⁴, the care of their own households, and the fear of God shown at home;—true charity or love of God beginning at home.

Whatever may be signified in that mysterious prophecy, that Elijah is to come before the great and dreadful day of the LORD, this we know, that the preparation for that coming will consist in this: That the spirit and power of Elias, that goes before, “shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest,” it is added, “I come and smite the earth with a curse⁵.”

⁴ Gen. xviii. 19.

⁵ Mal. iv. 5.

SERMON CCCVI.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

1 JOHN iii. 15.

“ Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer ; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”

THESE words of the beloved disciple appear to us to be strong words ; for they seem to place him that bears ill-will against his neighbour together with murderers. But if they sound strange to us, the reason is because we do not judge of such things as God judges of them ; for this is precisely the manner in which our LORD HIMSELF explains to us the Sixth Commandment, saying, in the Sermon on the Mount, “ It was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill ; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment : but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment : and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council : but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” Here we are told that all degrees of ill-will and unkindness in heart and word, as well as actions, will be considered in the great Judgment as coming under this commandment, and will be punished in proportion, thoughts, words, and deeds, some with a lighter, some with a heavier judgment ; all will be considered as breaking the Sixth Commandment. And therefore the explanation of this commandment in the Catechism is this : “ To hurt nobody by word nor deed, . . . to bear no malice nor hatred in my heart.”

And our LORD HIMSELF points out this in the Jews, who were desirous of His death, as the especial mark of Satan's children. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning¹." And therefore the beloved disciple throughout his Epistle dwells especially upon this as the most clear and infallible proof of those that are still in darkness, notwithstanding all their vain confidences, viz. if they love not their brethren. As Cain was cast out of the presence of God, and had the mark of God put upon him as a murderer, so St. John teaches us, that if we love not one another we bear upon us the mark of Cain himself, and are proved thereby to be, according to our Blessed LORD's expression, the children of the devil, and put out of God's presence. "In this," says he, "the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." And again, "That we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother²." You see that in speaking of loving one another, he passes on immediately to say, that not to love is to have the very sin of Cain himself. Now this is very much to be considered; for many think that as long as they fall short of the actual sin of murder, they have not much to fear under this commandment; that they have no occasion with the Prayer-Book to ask mercy for the past or grace for the future. And yet most assuredly the law of CHRIST goes entirely to the keeping of the heart in this and all other commandments: and in urging the necessity of watching and keeping clean the heart, HE says, "For out of the heart proceed murders³." HE does not say that unkind words and thoughts are as bad as murder, because HE says that all sins of this kind will be punished according to their different degrees: he that is angry with his brother will have one degree of punishment; and he that uses angry words with a still heavier judgment, according to the meaning of them; he that says, Raca, speaking against him with pride and scorn, will have one punishment; he that says, Thou fool, with more of malice in his meaning, will be beaten with many stripes, as it were, will have a heavier lot at the dreadful Judgment.

¹ John vii. 44.² 1 John iii. 10, 12.³ Matt. xv. 19.

What our Blessed LORD means is, that all ill will and anger, of every degree, is a mark which cannot be mistaken, that we are not of God's children, and shall have in the judgment to bear the portion of the wicked under the Sixth Commandment, and that exactly in proportion to the malice we have borne in thought, word, or deed. If in thought, then much more if in word; and if in word, then much more if in deed.

For even our unkind thoughts themselves are actually an evil to our neighbour; no one loves to be ill thought of by his neighbour, even if no worse comes of it; and we cannot pray for him sincerely while angry with him; therefore even our unkind thoughts do him an injury. But when it comes to angry words, then of course it is still worse for both parties, but especially for him that utters them, because they very seriously endanger his soul, and will be more heavily visited than bad and hard thoughts. And if his own unkind words provoke his brother to use the same, or to unkindness of heart, then two souls also are endangered, and the guilt of him that commenced is two-fold. "A root of bitterness" hath sprung up and "many will be defiled." And the fact is, that there never does arise any subject of strife, anger, and ill-will, but that many souls are thereby endangered. Anger and ill-will pass from one to another like an infectious disease: and therefore the enemy of souls is so very active in stirring up strife.

We may observe that our LORD and His beloved Apostle speak especially of this sin as being of the devil, who was "a murderer from the beginning;" and therefore it is the great proof to ourselves that so far as we are guilty of it we are in darkness. "He that saith he is in the light," says St. John, "and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now."

"He was a murderer from the beginning;" it was the death of soul and body that Satan brought into the world; and no sooner had he done that, than he instigates Cain to the murder of his brother; and, at the same time, urges him on to the eternal death of his own soul.

And we cannot but notice one thing which is pointed out as the especial cause of this ill-will which leads to murder. "And wherefore slew he him?" says St. John, speaking of that wicked one who slew his brother. "Because his own works

were evil, and his brother's righteous⁴." And why did the Jews thirst so much after the blood of CHRIST? It was for the same cause. "Ye seek to kill ME, because My word hath no place in you." And again, "Ye seek to kill ME, a man that hath told you the truth⁵."

Now from these things we may learn that there is nothing which so much provokes the ill-will of men, and that so deeply, as the goodness of others: so much so that the holiest of men who have appeared in the world have been put to death; and there has never been any very good man but what he has been violently persecuted, and, with very few exceptions, even unto death; such were the Saints and Martyrs of old. This should make us very careful how we venture to think and speak of holy persons, and of those that are better than ourselves. And St. John speaks of it as the great proof that we have passed from death unto life, that we "love the brethren." "The brethren," when St. John wrote, meant very holy persons who had sacrificed every thing for the love of CHRIST, not merely men of our own party or way of thinking; and to love such persons on account of their mortified and humble lives, instead of hating them because their example is a reproach to us, or envying them for their goodness—this is the greatest proof we can have that we have overcome the love of this world. For the world hates the good: and so far as we love the world, we cannot but hate the good. But now since all these sins of malice, anger, and uncharitableness do especially flow from him who was a murderer from the beginning, so the contrary to these do bear upon them in a particular manner the marks of the SON of GOD. Satan is most emphatically a murderer, because he brings about the death of body and soul in every manner that he can, never ceasing to watch and labour in order to do so. And he is of all mankind least like him, who labours and watches most of all by love and good offices to promote the good of his neighbour, both temporal and eternal.

This indeed may be said to be the great sum and substance of St. John's writings, that love in thought, word, and deed is the chief fruit of the SPIRIT, and the genuine and true sign that we

⁴ 1 John iii. 12.

⁵ John viii. 37. 40.

are sons of GOD. This it is which in every way he is bringing forward throughout, that as all kinds of ill-will are from him who was a murderer from the beginning, so love is of GOD, and GOD HIMSELF is love; and therefore that every instance of anger, and ill-will, and malice sets us far from HIM. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of GOD; and every one that loveth is born of GOD, and knoweth GOD. He that loveth not knoweth not GOD; for GOD is love. . . . Herein is love, not that we loved GOD, but that HE loved us. . . . Beloved, if GOD so loved us, we ought also to love one another." As love is the fulfilment of every commandment, so is it especially of this, keeping watch in the heart against every thing which can break this commandment. This love therefore, after the example of CHRIST, does not consist in loving those that love us; for in such cases there is no fear of murder, when every thing is meek, and obliging, and peaceable. We have no reward, CHRIST says, for this: the love of GOD, as shown in CHRIST, does not allude to this; for HE loved us while yet His enemies: it is, as St. John says, "not that we loved GOD, but that HE loved us." It is in all those cases that lead to ill-will that this love is shown, when our pride is hurt, and our self-love, when men appear not to love us.

"If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same⁶." "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you;" "that ye may be the children of your FATHER which is in Heaven; for HE maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust⁷." For thus did the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in His wings, on the guilty Jerusalem that slew HIM, as well as on His faithful disciples; thus did HE send the rain and dew of His HOLY SPIRIT on "the just and on the unjust," after they had put HIM to death.

"Thou shalt do no murder!" how much do these words contain! surely GOD speaks not as man speaks, and blessed is he who trembles at His words! For who among thoughtless men, that reflect not at all on the Law of GOD, would have thought how

⁶ Luke vi. 32, 33.

⁷ Matt. v. 45.

deeply this commandment hath reached him; trying his very inmost feelings, even from childhood up, sharper than a two-edged sword, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart?

Many a child has been startled and filled with awe at the wonderful extent of GOD'S LAW, upon hearing from the mouth of the JUDGE HIMSELF how HE would have this commandment observed: "whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgment:" and "whosoever shall say unto him, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

But if even a child has need to tremble, at finding our LORD thus to explain the Sixth Commandment, when he considers his own angry and unkind thoughts and words towards his brothers and companions, how much more have they who have come to manhood, with pride and selfishness growing with their years and strengthening with their strength!

"The law is not made," says St. Paul, "for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners⁸." That is to say, that the mere letter of the law is to alarm the consciences of ungodly men with the terrors of Mount Sinai and the day of Judgment; but the law of the Christian is no other than the love of GOD, as set before him in the words and the example of CHRIST, these explain to him the Ten Commandments, these bring down the Ten Commandments to his thoughts, words, and actions.

If any one would wish to know how to explain any commandment, let him take the example of CHRIST and meditate on that; there he will find more than any books can teach him.

Many a worldly man is satisfied with himself when he hears this commandment, because he has not broken it, he thinks, in the letter; but he who is taught by the SPIRIT of GOD trembles to think how far he falls short of this Divine pattern, "HE laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren⁹."

For, surely, if we are to be ready at all times to lay down our lives for others, every thing short of this is to be required of us according to this example. St. John goes on immediately to

⁸ 1 Tim. i. 9.

⁹ 1 John iii. 16.

apply it to the case of those who are in want; “but whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him⁹?” And if in bodily wants, very much more in wants of the soul are we to apply this law of taking care of our brethren’s welfare; that we should in every way endeavour to keep them from sin, to pray for them, and lead them to thoughts of God and eternity. As CHRIST spent His *days* in doing good to the bodies of men, in relieving every calamity that came before HIM, and still more by His gracious words and teaching calculated to heal their souls; so it was His custom to retire and spend whole *nights* in prayer; and no doubt these prayers also were for others, for HE HIMSELF had nothing to pray for, excepting for our good.

Now do we labour thus, according to our measure and opportunities and abilities, for the good of others who come before us, or are in any way connected with us; praying for them constantly, when we can do nothing else for them; and doing for them all else we can to obtain a blessing upon our prayers?

Do we consider our enemies as in some sense our best friends, because they give us opportunities of showing good-will and love towards them, and by so doing giving us the means of being like CHRIST, and the more acceptable to God?

Depend upon it, there are few things that assist us on our road to Heaven so much as a sincere forgiveness of injuries from the heart. And there can be no doubt, that, when our LORD and God has taught us to pray, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us,” HE did mean to assure us that the forgiveness we shall receive will be in proportion to that which we ourselves show to others: as we measure, it shall be measured to us again.

Now are there any among us who are not seriously moved in heart by the great love of God as shown in CHRIST;—who are not in consequence desirous to labour to do likewise, and to put their whole heart, soul, and strength, to this work, and to love others as we are loved of God? If this does not move us, yet there is another consideration which must come home to us; I mean this—our own urgent crying need of God’s mercy: surely there

⁹ 1 John iii. 17.

place, "Mortify your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence: . . . for which things' sake," he adds, "the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience³." And again, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, . . . let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints. . . . For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, . . . hath any inheritance in the kingdom of CHRIST and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things," he says, in the very words of the other Epistle, "cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience⁴." And in the Sermon on the Mount, when, in speaking of this commandment, our LORD says that lust in the heart is guilty of adultery, HE goes on immediately to connect temptations of this kind with the fire of hell; for HE adds, "and if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." By this, also, our LORD implies how very difficult it is to root out thoroughly a sin of this kind when it has once got into the heart: but in His great mercy HE warns us how much more easy it will be to overcome it now, than hereafter to suffer those torments, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

In the Levitical law, we know, it is commanded that all adulterers were to be stoned to death; no such person could be allowed to live in the holy nation of old; which seems to be a sign and figure of what is written in the Revelation, where whoremongers are shut out from the city of God, "and have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone⁵." And when the Church of God was free, and could act for herself, such persons were excommunicate,—were cut off from the Church below, both in life and death. It would be a very great mercy to such miserable persons if this were now the case; but as it is, a far more fearful judgment follows them up; indeed, by far the most fearful and terrible of all judgments: for as the Church, having her hands tied, and her voice stopped, cannot thus warn them, and so bring them to repentance, they are left to what is

³ Col. iii. 5, 6.⁴ Eph. v. 3, 5, 6.⁵ Rev. xxi. 8.

far worse than the stoning to death among the Jews; being given up to a spiritual death, a stony heart; and thus are shut out for ever from the kingdom of God. Such have, it is said, "their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness⁶." For this sin of uncleanness, arising from fulness of bread, the fire came down on guilty Sodom: for the sin of fornication, three and twenty thousand⁷ died in one day in the wilderness: we may be sure, therefore, that in the Christian state the mark of God's judgment would be upon them in the most signal manner; of which the greatest is, the light within being put out.

For it may be observed, that all sins of impurity have in an especial manner the effect of hardening the heart, of blinding the eyes, of quenching the good SPIRIT of God, of making the soul itself impure and unclean. And, therefore, when king David, the chief of all penitents, fell into this grievous sin, he was never afterward the same man he had been; he was evidently completely broken-hearted for all the rest of his days. And in the fifty-first Psalm, in which he most pathetically laments this sin, we find what that fear and anguish was which lay at the depth of his broken heart and wounded soul; it was that his heart was unclean, and that he feared the SPIRIT of God would leave him. "Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy HOLY SPIRIT from me. O give me the comfort of Thy help again, and stablish me with Thy free SPIRIT." And what is his only consolation in this depth of his affliction? It is this: "The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, shalt THOU not despise." Now, here it is evident that his only ground for consolation and hope was that he had a thoroughly broken and contrite heart: and if any Christian has fallen into what is called "deadly sin," such as fornication is, then let him be assured that he has no safety and no recovery excepting in coming to such a temper of

⁶ Eph. iv. 18, 19.

⁷ 1 Cor. x. 8.

heart as the holy David had, as it appears so pathetically expressed throughout this Psalm.

For the very fearful nature of all sins of uncleanness is, that they cut off and hinder repentance, by driving away the good SPIRIT of GOD, without which we cannot repent. Nothing is more certain from GOD's Word than that these sins,—adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and impurity of heart, will end in eternal damnation; and yet this is little thought of or considered, one might say it is not believed. And why is it not? It is because where these sins abound, the SPIRIT of GOD is quenched; and men cannot love GOD, or hope for Heaven, or fear hell, as they should do.

I have been told myself by an unhappy person living in this sin, that she fully believed in GOD and a future state, and well knew that at death she should go to that dreadful place where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And yet for all this she had no anxiety, no fear, no sign of repentance; although on being further pressed, she did allow that she had some thought she might repent before death. We may well indeed shudder to speak or to hear of this utter loss of the fear of GOD and of His judgments; but I mention it to show the remarkable effect of this sin in hardening the heart; there is something of this kind wherever this sin is found, that men become careless and indifferent about their future condition and the sure judgments of GOD. This alone can account for that indifference and lightness with which persons look on all things that approach to this deadly sin; as evil imaginations, bad words, loose company, fulness of bread, and dress: if the greatest guilt itself was looked upon as it should be, there would be a great dread of all these things that lead to it: and it would be impossible ever to hear of such a crime in a Christian land. But is this the case? Wherever an instance of this kind occurs, it pollutes and poisons the air far and wide, like a putrid carcase; so that a land which is defiled with it is spoken of in Scripture as loathsome and abominable in the sight of GOD, as Sodom was, however flourishing and fair it might have appeared, even “as the garden of the LORD.”

Now this crime was not only punished by the Jews with immediate death, but almost every heathen nation in the world has

fixed the penalty of death upon adultery, in order that such pollution should be removed from their land. But in this Christian nation there is no punishment at all for adultery, either by the State or by the Church. And not only this, but it is spoken and thought of very lightly; the public papers are full of such accounts; persons are used to it, and think nothing of it. Because it is neither punished with death nor with imprisonment, there is no inconvenience attached to it. There are not only instances of it in this Christian nation, but in every neighbourhood; there are several cases of persons thus living even in this parish. Now in no heathen country would the laws have allowed of this.

Our LORD said of the Jews, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it." Surely if heathen Nineveh will arise in the judgment against Jerusalem, guilty Jerusalem itself will rise in the judgment against this country, where such things are allowed!

Now the effect of crimes of this kind is, I say, that they defile the air far and wide; and such effect may be seen in this, that sins of this nature are looked upon without that fear and hatred with which they ought to be. We all know, for instance, that fornication and uncleanness are deadly sins, that persons who are guilty of them will, for a certainty, be shut out of Heaven on the last Day, without timely repentance. And such repentance is not easy, our LORD likens it to plucking out an eye or cutting off a hand, on account of the difficulty of it: and it may be observed, that of all our LORD's miracles in the Gospels, that which was performed with most apparent difficulty and pains, was the casting out of an unclean spirit; the persons possessed with it suffered very much before they were healed, and at the presence of CHRIST were thrown into great convulsions and agonies, the evil spirit struggling with them to the last. On one occasion His disciples endeavoured in vain to cast out an unclean spirit, and our Blessed LORD HIMSELF then pointed out the means of doing so, saying, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting⁸." There can be no doubt but that all these were signs to us of a spirit of impurity in the heart.

Now is this at all considered as it should be,—the deadly

⁸ Matt. xvii. 21.

nature of this sin, and the difficulty of recovery under it? Do not persons often come to God's holy altar at marriage, both of them deeply defiled previously with this sin, and think nothing of it? Now marriage is put very high in Holy Scripture: St. Paul cannot speak of it, as it were, without going off immediately to speak of that which it represents,—the spiritual union betwixt CHRIST and His Church. The Church itself has always considered it as something like a sacrament, or an ordinance by which grace is given: and our own Prayer-Book recommends that persons at marriage should receive the Holy Sacrament of our LORD's Body and Blood. Is it a light matter, then, to come to God's altar at such a time polluted with fornication already? Is not bitter repentance, and fasting, and humiliation, and solitude, more suitable for such than marriage? But what says the world to such cases? It is better than what is worse,—worse, that is, in worldly consequences. The Church says you are in a state of mortal sin: but the world comforts you by saying, although it be a sin even unto death, yet it might be worse!

Can any thing more fully indicate the low state of Christian morals which exists amongst us, than this way of speaking and thinking? This proves what has been said, that the very air we breathe is infected and polluted by such things.

Let us come, therefore, to children, which is our chief object on the present occasion. Our LORD has in a very especial manner called unto HIMSELF little children, taking them up into His arms, and saying, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven." And the reason of this, in great measure, is because such an age is most free from those sins which pollute the Temple of God, and drive away His HOLY SPIRIT. And therefore when such are described as the first fruits of the LAMB in Heaven, it is said, "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins⁹." On this account, too, our LORD has described the highest angels as watching with especial interest over children, and has denounced His heaviest judgments on those that offend these little ones, *i. e.* who cause them to fall. The reason why they are so dear to GOD is, because they are as yet, in some measure, pure in heart. They have that precious treasure which

⁹ Rev. xiv. 4.

worlds cannot buy, and which, when once lost, cannot be again recovered. And, alas ! at such an age they little know this their great happiness; they little know what it is to have what others would give worlds if they could but regain,—the innocence of childhood; and therefore they are too apt to lose this innocence before they are aware of the value of it.

Surely that parent can be no true Christian himself who would not rather his child should die, than that he should, by evil company, by bad words and thoughts, become defiled in mind and conscience before his reason has come to maturity. It is by little and little on these occasions that the enemy gains the advantage: pleasant companions which are a little older than himself, yet have not the fear of God; pleasant thoughts which, though not sinful in themselves, yet lead on to sin, and leave the eye of the serpent, and afterwards the sting also behind; and in females the wearing of apparel to please the eye, rather than attending to that inward adorning “of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price;” the reading of newspapers and idle books;—these are the ways by which, by little and little, young persons become gradually corrupted, until, they know not how, they are at last overtaken by such sins as they thought it was impossible they should have been guilty of. They then find who it is that has been so long tempting and deceiving them to their ruin; and when they find themselves overtaken by some deadly sin of uncleanness, then at length they find that those approaches to sin, which they heeded not, were only the snares of Satan and the ways to hell. Oh, that children themselves could have any thought of those exquisite pangs and agonies of mind that follow in those cases which are capable of recovery! And yet how blessed are they who, when once fallen, are visited by these, as it were, agonies of hell in time, and are thus enabled, by God’s grace, to recover themselves before their hearts are altogether polluted! Yes, I say, that agony of a wounded conscience, which is a foretaste of the pains of hell, and is the greatest of all pains which we know on earth, is blessedness indeed, in such cases, compared to a hardened and light heart. For when Satan has once succeeded so far, his next effort always is to make the soul incapable of knowing its own misery :

and he has no more easy and ready way of doing so than by leading persons into the company of those who make light of such sins. In such cases a light word will ease a heavy heart, when the light word is from Satan, and the heavy heart is from the good SPIRIT of GOD. Yes, if children could have any thought of what those pangs of a penitent soul are which turns to GOD after such sins, how carefully would they avoid all such temptations, such words, such company ! But those whose duty it is to watch over them have too often known the guilt, but never known the repentance. But oh, you, whoever you may be, who have to do with young persons and children, have pity on them, though you have no thought for yourselves ! think, oh, think a little of their innocency, though you have lost your own !

But how can you have pity on them, or win GOD's blessing for their protection, but by thinking a little more of yourselves and your own condition in His sight ?

You do not live in open sin, perhaps ; the world does not point the finger at you on this account ; and yet, if you consider, you well know it is not all right with you.

When an adulteress was brought before CHRIST in the Gospels, HE would not condemn her, because it was no business of His then to judge of such cases : HE had come not to judge or condemn, but to save ; and HE said, " He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her." By this we are taught this great and important lesson, that with regard to sins of this kind, each one is to look to himself, and judge himself, and not to look to the sins of others. Because CHRIST knew full well, that what men do in such cases, is to turn to others, and, it may be, to condemn them ; while all the while there is something in their own heart, perhaps, equally offensive in the sight of GOD.

Who shall escape His all-searching judgment ? Who so pure in heart, that he shall be able to stand before HIM in Whose sight the Heavens are not clean ? Who is there that has sufficiently considered that his body is no less than the Temple of the HOLY GHOST, unless he be reprobate ; and whosoever defileth the Temple of GOD, him shall GOD destroy ?

What need of humiliation is there for us all on account of

these pollutions which abound, and for which the judgments of God are hanging over us ! what need of mortification and prayer, both for others and for ourselves !

“ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth,” says the Apostle, “ but that which is good to the use of edifying. And grieve not the HOLY SPIRIT of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption¹. ”

Therefore it is evident that all light words on such a subject, and which are not edifying, grieve the good SPIRIT of God ; and destroy the seal of our baptismal covenant. Corrupting words defile two souls,—both those that speak, and those that hear. What shall such persons, then, who have used defiling words have to say, when God shall visit, and take account of every idle or corrupt word that men have spoken ? When thoughts, and words, and deeds of darkness shall be made manifest by the light, and be consigned to their own place of darkness ; and they shall find the fire of lust turned into that fire which shall never be quenched ?

Again, if the pure in heart alone shall see God, what shall be said of them whom the Apostle describes, to whom nothing is pure, because their very minds and consciences are defiled² ?

Or, again, if the eye of lust shall be guilty in the judgment, what shall be said of them whom the Apostle St. Peter describes, as “ having eyes full of adultery, and which cannot cease from sin³ ? ” Who can measure the greatness and accumulation of guilt which will be on such persons in the day of Judgment ?

Now it is very painful indeed to speak of such things, but it is most needful, that the judgments of God may not be forgotten by us amidst aboundings of iniquity.

It were far more pleasant to speak of the blessings of the pure in heart ; the infinite comfort of seeing God, both now and hereafter ; that pearl of great price—a clean and chaste heart, to which nothing is comparable in this world ; the pure and white robe of Baptism kept clear from stain and undefiled ; that love of God which can only dwell in a clean heart ; the innocence of childhood kept to old age ; and a virgin spirit, as in Daniel and St. John ; and what crowns it all, the “ pleasures ” which are at God’s right hand “ for evermore.”

¹ Eph. iv. 29, 30.

² Tit. i. 15.

³ 2 Pet. ii. 14.

But to us, in this place and in these days, humiliation and repentance and confession of sin is alone suitable,—to us all in approaching this subject : and this must be the work of each one for himself ; nothing can be so dangerous and so offensive to God as to be sheltering ourselves under the example of others : on the contrary, as we ought to hear of these sins with grief and sorrow, so ought we to bewail them in the sight of God, knowing that on no subject are His judgments more terrible, and that we ourselves shall not see HIM unless we are pure in heart ; that many will be shut out of Heaven whose sins are not known to the world.

Let us not stand aloof with the Pharisee, saying, “ I thank THEE I am not as other men are, adulterers ; ” but rather, not thinking of others, pray earnestly with the Publican, “ God be merciful to me a sinner ! ”

SERMON CCCVIII.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

ST. LUKE xvi. 9.

"I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

It may appear strange that immortal spirits, such as we know ourselves to be, who are to live through the everlasting ages with God, and to be made equal to the Angels, yet should have to spend our days upon earth among such low and poor objects and employments. The life of many is taken up with buying and selling, of others with earning wages, or paying wages; and, indeed, of almost all in some way in making or in keeping money, so as to render it a subject that takes up very much, not only of their time, but also of their thoughts. But the Gospel fully explains this, teaching us that all this state of things is but the means by which God is proving mankind, to ascertain what persons are fit to have entrusted to their care "the true riches;" for the treasures of the next world are thus described as the true riches, to teach us that the riches of this world are but shadows, not real and substantial, but a means of trying us, and no more. And because so many are found to fail in this trial, and to render the goods of this world a cause of sin, and not of salvation, therefore they are called "the unrighteous mammon:" money is said to be "the root of all evil;" it is called "filthy lucre," from making men filthy and unclean in the sight of God: the mere possession of it is said to render salvation so difficult,

as to be almost impossible ; to have but little of it is declared to be a state of blessing ; to get rid of it is said to lead to a state of perfection. " If thou wilt be perfect," said our LORD, " go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor¹." Not that riches in themselves are evil, because our LORD says we may make friends of them, such friends as to buy for us eternal treasures : " Make to yourselves friends of the unrighteous mammon²." They are called " unrighteous" by HIM who knew what was in man, on account of the effect they have on the heart, and the wickedness they will occasion, even among Christians. And although we are told to make friends of riches, yet this is by getting rid of them, as well and wisely as we can, lest they weigh down our souls to hell ; not in keeping them in any way, but in parting with them to God's glory and the good of others. No money can be considered safe, or truly our own, until it is put into the treasury of God ; by being spent by us, or given away, in the fear of God, and to His glory.

Now, with regard to stealing, the great object for a Christian is to remember what it is that God considers stealing, and not what the world does ; for the world allows of many things, which, if a Christian practises, he will no doubt be for ever shut out from the kingdom of God. For instance, in buying and selling, a person may make a very good bargain, and the world may applaud him, and yet God may not be the more pleased with him for it. A hundred years hence, his soul may think it over as the dearest bargain ever was made. And yet, what the Wise man said is as true now as ever it was, " As a nail sticketh fast between the joinings of the stones, so doth sin stick close between buying and selling³." But in all this, God is trying the hearts of men : " The LORD pondereth the hearts," says Solomon : " to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to HIM than sacrifice⁴."

Now there is no end to the number of laws which are made to keep Christians, if possible, from injuring each other ; and why is this, but that the fear of God cannot restrain men if they can overreach each other ? Lawsuits, indeed, sometimes happen in

¹ Matt. xix. 21.

² Luke xvi. 9.

³ Eccles. xxvii. 2.

⁴ Prov. xxi. 2, 3.

difficult cases between two persons who are both anxious to know and do what is right: but it is seldom the case in a lawsuit, that there is not injustice and covetousness on one side, and often on both: and, therefore, when a man appealed to our Blessed LORD to divide the inheritance between him and his brother, our LORD immediately came to the root of such contentions, which was of infinitely greater consequence than any earthly inheritance, saying to those around HIM, "Take heed and beware of covetousness." HE looked immediately on the heart, and read that, as HE will in His final judgment; as if to say, Whichever of you has the inheritance is of extremely little importance, but the covetousness in the hearts of you both, and of too many around ME, is of the greatest consequence. And then HE added that fearful parable of the Rich man who was building new barns when his soul was required of him⁵.

Again, there are numerous ways of carrying on business which men think very lightly of, but which will weigh most heavily on a man's soul in the day of Judgment. The value of any article in trade is supposed to be what a person may get for it in the market, which is in some degree true; but when a man's heart is set upon gain, this opens the door to numerous dishonest practices. A purchaser may be quite unable to form a true estimate of the value of what he purchases, from inexperience perhaps, from carelessness and inattention, and numberless other circumstances; but to take advantage of these is not according to the golden rule of doing as we would be done by. How common is it for men to be hiding the defects of their own goods, and depreciating their neighbour's, which they wish to purchase. And yet most assuredly all these matters pass on and are put down to our great account; for we are told expressly, that if any "man go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter, the LORD is the Avenger of all such"⁶.

A still heavier charge is there against some, and indeed, as all are liable to incur this charge who have others in their employment, it is very much to be considered;—and that is, of oppressing the poor, of not fairly dealing with them according to their due, because they have no helper; that is to say, because

⁵ Luke xii. 13.

⁶ 1 Thess. iv. 6.

they have no earthly helper : but for that very reason their cry has attributed to it in Scripture such especial power with God. "Enter not into the fields of the fatherless, for their REDEEMER is mighty : HE shall plead their cause with thee⁷." St. James tells us that even the keeping back the wages of the poor is not a matter below the consideration of the ALMIGHTY God. "The hire of labourers," he says, "kept back by fraud, crieth ; and their cries have entered into the ears of the LORD of Sabaoth⁸ ;" *i. e.* the LORD of Hosts ; it is known to HIM who both considers their cause, and has power to avenge it. In the present state of this country nothing is more easy than to oppress the poor, who cannot protect themselves, on account of the great want of employment ; and surely this opportunity to oppress the poor has never been taken advantage of more than by this nation at large ; yet what is more sure to bring down the displeasure of God on any people ?

But again, there is another practice which concerns quite another class of people, which cannot be passed over when we are speaking on this subject, that of living on what can be obtained from others, without earning it by honest labour—the practice of *begging*. Now this is not so bad as stealing in itself ; but it arises too often from covetousness ; it leads to unjust pretences, and falsehood, and idleness. In Holy Scripture very great are the exhortations of giving to the poor, who stand to us in CHRIST's stead. We know that CHRIST considers what is done to the poor as done to HIMSELF, and tells us that HE will remember such things especially on the Great Day. But then nothing whatever is said in the Bible to excuse those who are always endeavouring to gain what they can from the bounty of others. It says that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." A desire to *give* is blessed ; a desire to *receive* is the very contrary to this. Indeed Scripture itself expressly forbids this very thing. "When we were with you," says St. Paul, "this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat⁹." In another place he exhorts men to work and labour, not that they might live more comfortably, but in order that they might have to give. "Let him that stole," *i. e.* in his heathen state, before he became

⁷ Prov. xxiii. 11.

⁸ James v. 4.

⁹ 2 Thess. iii. 10.

a Christian, "let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth¹⁰." He tells us more than once that he laboured hard with his own hands¹, even when he might justly have claimed and obtained support from others, in order that he might set a good example by so doing.

In some cases indeed it becomes a matter of necessity that men should ask and live upon the charities of others; as in those countries where the poor have no support from the law of the land, and from infirmities or other reasons cannot maintain themselves; and of course when it is absolutely necessary, the case is much altered.

Certainly the distress in this place is usually such as to be almost unequalled in this country, and every one who has the means is bound to do his utmost to relieve it, in the wisest and best way he can think of: but as to the sufferers themselves, they must remember they have that portion which God assigns them: and great as their privations are, yet in other times and other countries religious men of their own accord have given up riches and honours, and submitted to lives of self-denial, suffering, and hardship greater than what is usually here endured, for the sake of religion, in order to keep their hearts constantly disposed to prayer, and be like JESUS CHRIST. And those that thus suffer according to the will of God, may by resignation make their sufferings an offering most pleasing to God, committing the keeping of their souls unto HIM in well-doing, as unto a faithful CREATOR. They beyond all are taught to become poor in spirit, to depend upon their Heavenly FATHER for their daily bread, and are invited by a thousand endearing expressions to cast all their care upon HIM, for HE careth for them. Many, I say, have of their own accord practised all these hardships for the sake of devotion, and in order to be upon earth like CHRIST and His Apostles: and those who cheerfully submit to the like may obtain of God the same blessings.

We may be assured, that there is no more noble character to be seen in the world than a poor man who is contented to be

¹⁰ Eph. iv. 28.

¹ Acts xx. 34. 1 Cor. iv. 12. 1 Thess. ii. 9.

poor for the love of God, who is neither tempted to steal nor to beg: such a one, however little in the eyes of the world, is greater than all others in the eyes of God and His holy angels, and of all good men. His indeed is the first blessing of the Gospel, which is given to "the poor in spirit." No riches or honours can bestow such true greatness as this, because it consists in being like JESUS CHRIST.

But the desire of gain is the root from which all evil spreads through men's lives; a wish to obtain and preserve all that they can: this closes up the hearts of the rich against the poor, and by so doing stops the current of the Divine blessings upon them on earth, and lays up against them a heavy account on the last Day. This leads the poor to be discontented, to forget the hand of God; whereas to behold that Fatherly hand in their own poor lot would be a far greater blessing than any thing which riches could procure. "Godliness with contentment," this is indeed "great gain," gain so great that nothing else can be compared with it.

The desire of money it is, says the same Apostle², which leads men "into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition;" and "pierces them through with many sorrows;"—the sorrows of worldly loss and gain; the sorrows of an evil conscience; the sorrows of labouring for that which satisfies not; manifold sorrows arising every day around the path of those in whose hearts the love of money has once taken possession.

Indeed if men were guilty of no dishonest practices in gaining and preserving their money, yet saving of itself arises most frequently from covetousness, and greatly increases it, and indeed may of itself be considered as a kind of dishonesty, unless it be on account of some worthy and good cause. For if we have more money than is needful to spend upon ourselves and families, to lay it by and hoard it up, without a great and just reason, is to rob the poor and the Church of God of what is due to them. To labour, indeed, in the season of health and strength against old age and sickness, or in order to provide for others who are dependent upon us, until they can provide for themselves,—this

² 1 Tim. vi. 9.

indeed is our bounden duty; and if done without covetousness or anxious care, God will bless and assist us in such honest endeavours. "If a man provide not for his own," says St. Paul, "he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel³." But beyond this, if any man is year by year accumulating money, becoming more and more rich and loaded with this world's goods, as the time draws nearer when he must be for ever parted from them, let him look to it: there is greater danger before him than he thinks of: his heart will become hardened and blinded by the deceitfulness of riches; and he may depend upon it his treasure in Heaven will be lessened a hundredfold by all that he saves before he dies. And "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul⁴?"

Some again are naturally of another turn, and are inclined to be at times generous and liberal, while they are not, and have not been just and honest: but this of course cannot be considered as true generosity; they are liberal with that which is not their own, and is due to others. No charity can be acceptable to God in such cases until a person does all that he can to be just. And if in his past life he has not been strictly just to all persons, and in all his dealings, then he must begin by repentance, before he thinks of being generous and charitable. "Half of my goods I give to the poor," said the penitent Zaccheus, "and if I have done any wrong to any man, I restore fourfold." He thought it not enough to give up his wealth into the storehouse of God with one hand, but with the other he was ready to make restitution if any injustice could be found in him. He gave up his goods to the poor,—this was the great grace of the Gospel; and thus did he obtain an abundant entrance into the kingdom: and although a despised publican, and not considered a true Israelite, yet he was just according to the Law, ready to "restore fourfold⁵:" thus offering to fulfil with both hands all legal and evangelical righteousness. And thus he received our Lord's own gracious declaration, not only that he was a true child of Abraham, but also that salvation had come to his house⁶.

³ 1 Tim. v. 8.

⁴ Mark viii. 36, 37.

⁵ Exod. xxii. 1.

⁶ Luke xix. 9.

With regard to profits unjustly made, and goods unjustly obtained, as there can be no salvation without repentance, so is there no repentance without restitution, if it is possible. On this subject, therefore, there can be the outward signs and tokens of true repentance, which there cannot be in the case of many sins ; murder and bodily injury inflicted on another, and fornication and adultery, may be repented of, but cannot be repaired in this world ; they can in no way be undone. But in sins of fraud and injustice, the evil can often be, in a manner, undone by large restoration and abundant recompence. And as sin is quite certain to find out and overtake every man sooner or later, when property is dishonestly obtained, the guilt remains until the property is restored. Now if men would at all consider this, viz. that whatever unjust gains they make, they must restore them again before there can be any acceptable repentance ; this consideration alone would make things very different to what they now are.

As it is, although the Gospel requires so much of us on this subject,—so much, indeed, that one would have thought that his brother's interest would have been as safe in the hands of a fellow-Christian as his own ; and that every one would be far more desirous to avoid injuring another than to be injured himself ; yet, notwithstanding, wherever we go, Christians are to each other as wolves and foxes ; whosoever is desirous to do right makes himself a prey : a simple-minded honest Christian is as a lamb among wolves. In trades of all kinds, in all professions and modes of life, there are ways of unjust gain which no human laws can reach, and which are, therefore, considered by the world as allowable : and over these the conscience sleeps, until the immortal spirit passes into its eternal condition : men talk with admiration of how much a man has left behind him ; as if that were all ; as if the earth that is thrown over his dead body covered all his sins, and they should never rise up again.

It has been said, even by men of this world, that an honest man is the most noble work of God ; as if this honesty were of value beyond any thing we can behold, and like every thing else of great value, on account of its being so uncommon. And what says Holy Scripture of the same ? When the Psalmist

asks, in the fifteenth Psalm, who shall dwell in the tabernacle of God, and find rest on His holy hill, speaking in the HOLY GHOST, he describes no one else but what we should call an honest man. "He that walketh uprightly; and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart." "He that sweareth unto his neighbour and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own hindrance." "He that hath not given his money upon usury; nor taken reward against the innocent."

It is meant by these words to describe a person who is in every way upright and sincere in his dealings, even under temptations to the contrary. Now the New Testament does not say much of honesty and integrity; because it is always setting before us a great deal more,—teaching us that we should not be content merely to be just and honest, because God deals with us not according to strict justice, but in overflowing love and goodness. We are told to give not only just measure, but far more, "good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over;" to lend, hoping for nothing again; to sell what we have, and give alms; if any one would rob us, to let him do so, and have even more than he takes⁷; and yet to do things of this kind, and to be in part of our conduct generous and charitable without strict integrity also in all matters of business, this were but to build without a foundation.

But yet, blessed be God! so great is His mercy in the Gospel, that if we labour after the fulness of these Evangelical graces, we shall also, at the same time, be enabled to fulfil all these duties of the Law: for if we give away abundantly, according to the Gospel, this will go far to root covetousness out of the heart. And when there is no covetousness, we shall give to every man his own; and when we give all that we can, no one can complain of being defrauded.

Yes, how great indeed and wonderful is the mercy of God to us in JESUS CHRIST! Many a one beginning, as it were, for the first time to be a Christian, when he is near the end of his course, is almost overwhelmed at his former deeds of wrong and unfairness; but even now, let him, if in earnest, give all that he

⁷ Luke vi. 38. 35. 29.

can to the poor, with Zaccheus ; and with the same temper of heart he will be ready, and glad also, where he has wronged, to restore fourfold : and charity, which shows mercy to others, shall cover our own sins ; for as we forgive others, we shall be forgiven.

SERMON CCCIX.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

ST. MATT. xxvi. 59, 60.

“ Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against JESUS, to put HIM to death ; but found none : yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none.”

THE sins of men were never shown in more strong a light than when they came forth against CHRIST : and never was the breaking of the Ninth Commandment set forth in all its bearings more remarkably than in those who sought false witness against HIM. This commandment is explained by the Catechism to signify all “ evil speaking, lying, and slandering ;” and certainly never was all that is contained in these words found to run to a head so much, to show more clearly whom they come from, and what they come to, than on this occasion, when they sought false witness against CHRIST.

By the Ninth Commandment God has, as it were, put His shield over the character and good name of our brother, in order to protect and shelter it, as what is to him more dear it may be than life ; and knowing how very busy the great enemy is to kindle men’s hearts and tongues against each other. For nothing is more common, in some shape or other, than “ evil speaking, lying, and slandering ;” it is the way in which men do evil to their neighbour, more than by any other ; many who would neither strike nor defraud another, yet do not hesitate to injure

him by evil words. When there is ill-will at heart, it is in this manner it most frequently shows itself.

Now first of all let us see the true character of this vice as shown in this instance against our Blessed SAVIOUR. "They sought false witness against HIM, but found none;" they that spoke and they that heard were very desirous, but nothing would hold: His life was so infinitely pure and spotless that nothing could be fastened on HIM with any colour of truth. "At the last came two false witnesses." And perhaps we may at first have wondered to find these called "false witnesses" at all, because what they said was so exceedingly like the truth. They implied they had heard HIM say, "I will destroy," or, "I am able to destroy this temple." Now we find on the occasion referred to, three years before, as St. John tells us, that CHRIST had said something of this kind, yet not quite this; HE had not said, "I will destroy," but "destroy ye," or "ye will destroy;" but here, with a very slight change, they make all the difference, giving the expression a turn such as they required to suit their wicked purpose. Now this is the very thing which men usually do in evil speaking; they pretend to repeat the words of another in conversation, but by a little alteration in their mode of repeating them, they give them a meaning which they were not intended to have. But this is not all, for although our LORD did indeed speak of the temple, yet HE meant something very different from that temple of the Jews; HE was speaking of His own Body, which HE would raise again in three days. And we find that these chief-priests and elders well knew that HE spoke of rising again in three days. Now this again is precisely what is commonly done when men misrepresent their neighbours. They may repeat even the very words they used, but give quite another meaning to them; so that you might at first doubt whether they were exactly to be called false witnesses; but if we come to their heart and intention, we should find them false witnesses of the worst kind. And although we may not often meet with an instance so strong as this, yet something of the kind is not at all an uncommon case; for indeed the language of very many, indeed of most people, when they come to speak of others, is so made up of a slight colouring or change, according to their own dislikes and aversions, or envyings;—that they have yet to take very

great pains before they have learnt the language of truth and love. Indeed an Apostle himself says, that "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man¹."

Another point which we may learn from this false testimony against CHRIST is this, that no holiness and goodness of life can protect any one against the evil and slanderous tongue; on the contrary, good men in all ages have most suffered from it. It was the weight of calumny which HE had to bear, that brought our Blessed LORD's life so speedily to an end: all the good HE did was evil spoken of, and turned against HIM. HE was called "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber," although His meat and drink was to do the will of GOD: HE was called "the friend of publicans and sinners," because HE laboured to deliver men from sin: HE was said to be mad, Who was the very Wisdom of the FATHER; and to have a devil, and to cast out devils by submission to the chief of them, and by Satan's power: HE was solemnly charged of stirring up sedition; and condemned as one guilty of blasphemy against GOD. And that these things did very much afflict His meek and blameless soul is evident in many passages of His life; and especially from the pathetic account HE gives of them in His lamentations throughout the Psalms. "False witnesses are risen against ME; they laid to My charge things that I knew not." "The mouth of the deceitful is opened upon ME;" "they have spoken against ME with false tongues; they compassed ME about also with words of hatred." "Their throat is an open sepulchre; the poison of asps is under their lips;" they "have whet their tongue like a sword, and shoot out their arrows, even bitter words; that they may privily shoot at HIM that is perfect; suddenly do they hit HIM, and fear not²."

Now that which is here shown so strongly in the life of our LORD, is an example of what may be found in all good men after their degree of goodness; that against them is directed the evil and false tongue. "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household³?" And the reason why is very evident; for this sin has

¹ James iii. 2.

² Ps. xxxv. 11; cix. 1, 2; v. 9; lxiv. 3, 4.

³ Matt. x. 25.

in it the especial marks of Satan, whose very name signifies the "calumniator" or "slanderer;" and he is spoken of as "the accuser of the brethren," "which accused them before our God day and night⁴." It is, therefore, no wonder that he should be day and night stirring up false accusations upon earth, putting his poison under the lips of men when they think not of it; and shooting from their mouths his own arrows, even bitter words, in the dark: and that these should be directed not only against all men in general, but especially against good men. These arrows, I say, bear upon them peculiarly his mark; for, first of all, they consist in speaking evil, and how can Satan be more strongly shown than by delighting in evil, in finding evil among men, in suggesting thoughts of evil, and speaking evil? And, secondly, this sin consists in speaking falsely; which shows most distinctly, that they come from the father of lies.

And this is the case not only in the worst instances of this sin, as in false swearing, but in all degrees of it when evil-speaking is found to give a colour and complexion to common conversation: when two or three are met together, how often is it the case, that instead of truth and love showing that CHRIST is among them, if people would only pause and consider, they would find, that it was "the accuser of the brethren" that was present with them, and that they were doing his work; increasing and causing ill-will and hatred in those that speak, and in those that hear. "A lying tongue," says the wise man, "hateth" even "those that are afflicted by it⁵." And as it stirs up hatred in the heart of him that speaks, much more does it in those that hear; keeping up contention instead of healing its wounds, for "where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth;" "the words of a talebearer are as wounds; and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly⁶." Whereas, "the tongue of the wise is health⁷."

Again, there is another remarkable circumstance in these false accusers of CHRIST; that they were thereby bringing upon themselves that very destruction which they were preparing against HIM. CHRIST HIMSELF overcame death, but His false

⁴ Rev. xii. 10.

⁵ Prov. xxvi. 28.

⁶ Prov. xxvi. 20. 22.

⁷ Prov. xii. 18.

accusers perished: when the high-priest rent his clothes and said CHRIST had blasphemed, the Jewish law of itself ceased, and was at an end: the veil of the temple was rent in twain; the Jewish temple itself was utterly destroyed by the false accusers themselves who brought that false charge: and never was greater blasphemy spoken than by that high-priest who said CHRIST had blasphemed. They brought all the destruction on their own heads; they falsely accused CHRIST, to save themselves from the Romans; and the Romans utterly destroyed their place and nation. In three days the Jewish Church was destroyed by them: in three days CHRIST raised up the temple not made with hands, the Christian Church, the Temple of His own Body.

Now this was precisely according to what had been declared in the Law as the peculiar punishment GOD had set on bearing false witness; for we read in Deuteronomy⁸, "If a false witness hath testified falsely against his brother, then shall ye do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother." And this, indeed, was probably intended as a kind of prophecy of what should find its great fulfilment in what happened respecting CHRIST. In like manner were there other instances in the Old Testament wherein this Law was wonderfully fulfilled, and those fulfilments of it became, as it were, types or prophecies of this its great fulfilment. Thus of the false accusers of Daniel, we read that they were cast themselves into that den of lions wherein Daniel had been unhurt⁹: and so, the destroyers of the Three Children died themselves by the fiery furnace; and the wicked Haman was hanged on that gallows which he had made for Mordecai: and, in the Apocryphal book of Susannah, by the judgment of Daniel, we read, that "according to the law of Moses they did unto the false witnesses in such sort, as they maliciously intended to do to their neighbour." And in another instance, more remarkable than all, when Naboth was put to death by the false witnesses of Ahab and Jezebel, it is very particularly recorded how the judgment of GOD was declared and fulfilled. It was in the very garden of Naboth that the Prophet of GOD met Ahab, and said, "In the place where dogs licked

⁸ Chap. xix. 19.

⁹ Dan. iii. 24.

the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine¹." And, again, by the wall of Jezreel, where Naboth lived, the dogs shall eat Jezebel. She was cast down out of the window of her own palace; and hard by her own palace at Jezreel was the garden of Naboth.

Now all this is very much, indeed, to be observed, for it has, we may be sure, as all Scripture has, an especial reference to ourselves. For when, in the New Testament, we are warned against this sin of judging others, it is usually connected with the judgment of GOD that will be passed upon ourselves. "Judge not, that ye be not judged," says our LORD; "for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged²." And St. Paul, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things." "And thinkest thou that thou shalt escape the judgment of GOD³?" And thus, in the case of the woman taken in adultery, when, according to the Law, the witness was to cast the first stone in putting her to death, our LORD said, "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone⁴." As if to say, In judging another, remember that the judgment of GOD will be upon you according to this judgment, all ye that bear witness against others.

This consideration should surely make us very fearful of unkindly judging others, lest we should thereby be treasuring up a heavier judgment against ourselves. We read that the very sentence of condemnation, on the last Day, will be, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant:" we shall, indeed, sit, as it were, in judgment upon ourselves; and all the things that we have said in condemnation of others will be brought forth as a proof that we ourselves well knew what was right, and were very ready to condemn in others those things we ourselves have been guilty of. Thus it will be measured to us according to the measure with which we have dealt to others; and every mouth shall be stopped before GOD, by self-condemnation, when the JUDGE shall say, "Shouldest not thou have had pity on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee⁵?"

¹ 1 Kings xxi. 18, 19, 23.

² Matt. vii. 1, 2.

³ Rom. ii. 1, 3.

⁴ John viii. 7.

⁵ Matt. xviii. 33.

We may observe, that the more men judge themselves, the more afraid they are of judging others, and the less are they inclined to judge them harshly; and thus both those ways of escaping a severe judgment of God are found in the same persons; for it is said, "If we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged;" and also, "Judge not" others, "that ye be not judged."

But the fact is, that for the keeping of this, as of every other commandment, we must come at last to see that nothing else can avail but to love God with our whole heart, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. The love of God is the only keeping of our own souls: the love of our neighbour is the only keeping of his good name and of all that belongs to him. Therefore in charity, which comprehends both of these, as St. Paul describes it, we shall find the full keeping of this commandment as it must be kept in CHRIST'S kingdom. What temptation can there be to hasty words against our neighbour where there is no impatience in the heart, but that heavenly love abides, which, as St. Paul says, "suffereth long and is kind?" There can be no evil speaking against good men where there is no envy; for the chief cause which occasions evil speaking is envy, because our brother's works are righteous while our own are evil, or because some good thing or supposed good in him casts ourselves into the shade: but in true love there is none of this; for, as St. Paul says, "charity envieth not." Again, evil speaking arises in great measure from pride and selfishness: but "charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." "Charity seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil. Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." If indeed true charity should find it necessary to speak out against wicked men, it will indeed do so, because it "rejoiceth in the truth;" but even in doing so it is very unlike the world; for the world takes pleasure in speaking evil: but not so true charity; it will speak even then with pain and tenderness, for it "rejoiceth not in iniquity."

No man's good name, I say, can be safe in his brother's keeping excepting where true love is: he that harbours ill-will against another will find numberless ways of expressing, and of spreading and filling others with this ill-will, although he does not dare openly to profess it in words. But true love, on the contrary, will cover all sins: it will cover the sins of those in

whose breast it abides, on account of the great power which true love has with God : and it will cover the sins of others also, not delighting to speak of their faults when it sees them, but rather to hide them out of tenderness and compassion ; and often indeed not being able to see them : for true love is very blind to the faults of others : it very readily sees, and takes hold of, and delights in the good, but is very slow to see the evil of a brother. And a blessed blindness indeed it is ; it is like the innocency of our first parents before their eyes were opened by sin to discern good and evil. Such simplicity, indeed, of Divine love may often be deceived in this evil world, and in thinking no evil may often be mistaken ; but what of that ? It is better to be so deceived many times, rather than once to suspect evil of an innocent person.

Such blessed innocency of mind which “thinketh no evil,” judging of others from the purity of its own mind, is of infinitely higher worth than all the wisdom and shrewdness of this world, which consists, for the most part, in knowing evil, and consequently in thinking evil. One is like the temper of the blessed angels ; for if there is any ignorance in them, it is ignorance of evil : the other is after all like the wisdom of Satan, which consists in knowing evil and suspecting evil.

And how can he do good to his neighbour who thinks evil of him ? Surely he is not so disposed towards him as to do him good ; and to suspect evil without cause is the very way to produce that evil which we suspect. On the contrary, that childlike love that will persist in thinking well and speaking well of others, is most likely to produce that very good which it supposes : for hope is very much connected with both faith and charity ; and he that thinks well of others will not fail to pray for them : and in all his intercourse with them he has the key to their hearts.

The very sight of a man who loves his neighbours, and delights to think well of them, does good to all around him : it puts to silence evil tongues and unkind suspicions ; and it very much promotes truth also, which God so especially loves, Who HIMSELF is Truth : for as men are more apt to speak evil of others than good, in so doing they are, upon the whole, more apt to speak falsely also than to speak truly.

Again, all persons and almost all circumstances have, more or less, a good and a bad side; and therefore both good and evil may be truly spoken of them: but men in general are more apt to see the evil in others and to set it forth strongly, and if there is any evil in their own hearts, to put a colour of their own upon it, even beyond the truth. But the good which Christian love sees is equally true, more true full often than the evil which the world supposes, and makes the good still more bright than it was before, by throwing its own heavenly light upon it.

Blessed indeed is this love! it is like the spirit of childhood blooming fresh in old age, a Divine childhood, as the sun of this world goes down: it is the temper of Heaven, of angels, and of little children. It is found in very wonderful instances in those who have been long labouring to love God and to forget themselves in His love. "The accuser of the brethren" cannot rub on them his own cursed leprosy of envy: the hard-hearted wisdom of this world hath not eaten into their hearts with that iron which entereth into the soul.

And what can do more good in this evil world than this blessed and angelic temper that thinketh and speaketh no evil? The good or kind opinion which is entertained of us by others is one of the highest of earthly blessings: it is of more consequence to our comfort than property or personal advantages; and how very much this depends on the breath of others! He that thinks and speaks kindly of his neighbour does him more good than he who gives him money: and if giving of alms has such a blessing laid up with God, surely this greater benefit to our neighbour will not lose its reward.

Yes, most assuredly, he that thinks and speaks kindly of his neighbour, from a true spirit of love, has on him a mark that he is himself a child of God; and as a child of God he will bear a blessing with him wherever he goes. And whatever differences of opinion may prevail on religious matters in the Church of CHRIST, all men do naturally conclude that it will go well at the last with that man who has so loved all men in CHRIST, that he could never bear to speak of others but as he would they should speak of him.

SERMON CCCX.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

PROVERBS iv. 23.

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

THE last of the Ten Commandments differs from the preceding ones in this, that whereas they spake more of the outer fulfilment of the commandment in word or deed, this speaks of the keeping of the heart. In them we are commanded not to commit adultery, not to steal; but in this not even to covet or desire. This comes at once to the very root of all evil in the corrupt heart of man; “for out of the heart proceed murders, adulteries, false witness, blasphemies¹.” This sets before us at once the eye of God that seeth in secret, HIM Who trieth the reins and knoweth the thoughts long before,—before they come to acts of open sin: this carries on our thoughts at once to the unseen world and the final judgment, in which the love of God alone will be able to stand.

Now this is very remarkable, that this commandment should thus come in the last of all in this manner, and yet that it should enjoin no new thing as separate and distinct from the rest; for it commands nothing but what was in fact contained in the other commandments, and to keep this will be to keep the others, and is the only true keeping of them: for surely he who does not

¹ Matt. xv. 19.

covet or desire, can never be tempted to commit adultery or to steal : but if we do not fall into these flagrant sins of uncleanness or theft, yet if the desire of them is in the heart, we shall not stand in God's judgment.

Now this is remarkable in being precisely the way in which God dealt with the Jews of old : He first of all gave them the letter of the commandments, plain precepts of outward duty, such as human laws could reach, and temporal promises ; but by degrees He disclosed and revealed to them that in these were contained wonderful things, great spiritual laws, heavenly promises, eternal punishments, such things as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard ; and that all depended upon the keeping of the heart, which is in fact the very presence-chamber of ALMIGHTY GOD, and out of which are the issues of life.

Thus, for instance, it may be observed, that the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, in which the Law is contained, do not so much unfold the spiritual nature of that Law, and the great moral duties it contained, so much as the last book of Moses, which is called the Second giving out of the Law : for in this the Christian kingdom is more distinctly implied. In like manner those heavenly things which were veiled in the types and shadows of the Law, were afterwards still more fully revealed in the Prophets : for those prophecies which broke forth when the holy nation were going into captivity, were like streaks of light going before among the shadows of the morning, until the Sun of Righteousness arose in the Gospel, when the Day-spring from on high came to visit those who were sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.

Thus it is with the Ten Commandments : the Jews under the bondage of the Law did not perceive this ; deceiving themselves and others, they thought only of the letter : this was the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, which cannot enter into the kingdom of God, where the new heart is required ; and therefore they were like whited sepulchres, all beautiful without, but within full of all uncleanness and dead bones, the putrifying corruption of the old Adam. And the Rich young man from among them could say, "All these have I kept from my youth up : " he thought only, like the Pharisees, of the outward keeping of the Law, as if it was only intended to keep out reprobate livers,

as they esteemed the heathens and publicans. Yet surely he had forgotten the last, "Thou shalt not covet," or he would have come to a very different mind: instead of saying, "All these have I kept," he would have cried out with St. Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through JESUS CHRIST our LORD²." He would have felt that the covetousness within him was already working death, and would gladly have sold all that he had to get rid of it, in order that he might follow CHRIST.

This commandment indeed it was which led St. Paul to see the spiritual and searching nature of all the Law of God, and how impossible it was for the natural unregenerate man to fulfil it. This it is which he so pathetically describes in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. "I had not known sin," he says, "but by the Law; I had not known concupiscence, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet. . . . And the commandment which was ordained to life I found to be unto death." And then, after describing at length the miserable state of the natural man on account of this unceasing lust within, he exclaims, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It was from thence he found that there really was no fulfilling of the Law but by the love of God, shed in the heart through CHRIST and by His grace. "But now," he says, "we are delivered from the Law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Truly to know the spiritual nature of the Law is to know that we are sold under sin; and truly to feel and lament this, as a good man must do, is to feel ourselves, with St. Paul, in sore travail and heavy-laden. And those that thus travail and are heavy-laden CHRIST invites unto HIMSELF, saying, "Come unto Me; take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me: for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." And from experience of this St. Paul goes on to say, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through HIM that loved us." "I live no more, but CHRIST liveth in me." "I can do all things through CHRIST which strengtheneth me." For as CHRIST fully and entirely kept the Law by the most perfect love of God and love of man, so shall they who are

² Rom. vii. 24, 25.

found in HIM have their hearts circumcised from all worldly desires; and thus shall they be able to keep the Law, the new Law of love; to take upon them the yoke of CHRIST, which is easy to us, because HE by His grace bears it together with us; and to sustain the burden of His commandments, which would be otherwise the heavy burden of the Law, and intolerable and insupportable, but which love makes light and pleasant.

Now of this last commandment, it may be observed, how particularly it specifies and mentions the objects of covetousness: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, nor his wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his." By this of course it plainly means to intimate, that there is no single particular of any kind that we are allowed to set our heart upon; that although we covet nothing else but one object, by offending in one point we are guilty of all³. It seems to cut off at once every opening to any worldly desire, every single part or fibre in the root of covetousness; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are here entirely rooted out of the heart, in order that the cross of CHRIST may be planted therein, in its length, and breadth, and height, to bring forth fruit unto life. It is as if it said, "My son, give ME thine heart:" or as if it came round at last to the very first commandment, "Thou shalt have none other gods but ME." This is the beginning, and the middle, and the end of all the commandments.

Every thing, I say, is here entirely cut off by this; the evil eye is entirely plucked out; the hand and the foot of the old man are cut off; the heart itself is made clean, which is the very fountain-head of all our actions. For so far as we have within us any desire for earthly things, we are sure to covet that which is another's: the value of all worldly goods is only by comparison: if a man feels himself poor, it is only by comparison with another who is richer than himself, who has something which he has not: if, therefore, his heart is set on such things, he cannot but covet. Or, again, a good name with the world is but by comparison; and if we think much of this, we shall not like to be cast into the shade by our brother having a better

³ James ii. 10.

name than ourselves. "Thou shalt not covet:" all concupiscence and desire must be cast out if we would come to the perfection of CHRIST, and be as HE wished His disciples to be.

And now, surely, we may well ask, how can this be? how can the heart of man ever be empty? how can his soul ever become cold as the stone, dead as a lifeless trunk? No, indeed, this never can be; there is nothing so insatiable as the heart of man; it has in it a fire that nothing can quench; a love that is stronger than death; it must covet, it must crave, and long, and desire. Nay, more than this, the better the heart of any man is, the less it is hardened, and made cold and dead by the world, the more earnestly it must covet and long for something; the more unsatisfied and craving it will be, the more earnestly bent on obtaining more and more; the more covetous and full of anxious concern, and fear, and sadness, that it has obtained so little; the more fearful, and sleepless, and restless, lest it lose what it has already gained; the more will it be consumed and worn away by a fire that burns within; full of a sort of Divine jealousy, full of pining desire, full of insatiable covetousness. "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after THEE, O GOD: my heart is athirst for GOD."

No, the heart of man cannot be empty, but it must be emptied of this world and of self, in order that it may be filled with GOD: the heart of man cannot be dead and cold, but it must be freed from the fire of lust, and the life of the old Adam, in order that it may be filled with the fire of the SPIRIT, and live unto GOD. Two masters we cannot serve. All things that the soul of man can desire, are in GOD; and woe be to us, if we seek for them elsewhere but in GOD! If we earnestly covet those things which HE has promised, we shall not envy our neighbour, or desire that which is his; for GOD is an infinite Ocean of all goodness; and those riches that are with HIM, and hid in CHRIST, are abundantly enough for us all: of these we shall have no wish to deprive our neighbour; but, rather, we shall delight to see the same in him, and to gain for him the same blessings from GOD. We shall not covet the house of this man, nor the ox and the ass of that man; but, on the contrary, we shall see in them some marks of those eternal riches which shall not be taken away, and these we shall covet, very earnestly, according to their real and

true worth. We shall see in one man signs of long-suffering and patience, and shall compare it with our own deep poverty in this respect; we shall prize and value this in him, and not hate him for it, nor wish to deprive him of it; but, on the contrary, we shall love him the more for it; we shall see GOD and CHRIST in him; and when we think over, with sorrow, our own sad deficiencies in this point, we shall learn of him, we shall make his riches our riches, by loving to see them in him; and if we ourselves improve in this respect, we may thereby improve him also; and both obtain more abundantly, for ourselves and for each other, the same blessings from God. Now, surely, there is not too much covetousness of this kind in the world, this Divine covetousness, if I may so call it, this ever-longing desire for treasures in Heaven. When God hath said, Thou shalt not covet the ox or the ass of thy neighbour, knowing how soon such things must perish, and how soon those that desire them must perish with them, and showing us how such desires have upon them the marks of the devil, by their leading to all manner of sin and wickedness wherever they are found;—HE has, at the same time, scattered through His kingdom upon earth signs of His eternal riches, which we may desire and long for so earnestly as to be able to think of no other. Wherever we see tokens of the love of God, of long-suffering, of humility, of devotion, there we see some indication of what will be found at last to be eternal treasures.

If another man is richer, or more learned, or more beautiful in outward appearance, or more highly thought of and esteemed by the world than we are, it matters not at all to a Christian; if he thinks much of these differences, then he must covet them; and, surely, the language of most men with regard to these things shows plainly that they think very much of them; for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

But if we know that another has longer and more frequent times set apart for devotion than we have, and is, therefore, to use our Blessed Lord’s own expression, more “rich towards God,” this, surely, concerns us very much; here is one growing rich in eternal treasures, and showing me that I am poor indeed. Shall I then, in such a case, wish to lessen what is his, and take from him these, his more frequent devotions? should I be any

richer for that? Far from it, I should lessen even that which I have; I should be no better by making him as lukewarm in religion as myself. No; I should, by God's grace, covet what is his, not by depriving him of it, but by endeavouring to do the same: I should not wish to put out, or take from him, his light which he had received from Heaven, but should endeavour to light my lamp by his, that both might burn together; that we both might have more light from each other, and be able, the better, to see our way.

Or, again, if we see another richer than ourselves in having something the world prizes, which we have not, this can be no great matter to him who has in his heart the love of God; but if we see another quite indifferent to such things, and showing by his conduct that he cares not for them, because, like the good Mary, he hath chosen the good part, and the one thing which alone is needful; then, surely, this does concern us very much: to see, or hear, or read of an instance like this with unconcern and indifference, would, indeed, be a great proof that we were already far gone in the love of this world. On the contrary, if a person were to spend anxious days and sleepless nights, as the saints did of old, on witnessing a case of this sort, surely this were a great sign of hope for himself; for a covetousness of this kind would never rest till it had added something to its own eternal treasures.

For, in cases such as this, we may be assured that whatever good we see in another, we are able ourselves to obtain the same from God, if we please, and might have obtained before this. With regard to any earthly object we may see in another's possession, no pains of ours, perhaps, could ever have gained the like; for we are not sure that God would grant it to our labours or our prayers. But whatever progress in holiness we witness in another, whether patience, or charity, or heavenly-mindedness, this we may assuredly attain to by our endeavours and prayers. It is this which is especially contained in the great promise made to prayer. If ye know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly FATHER give good things, yea, give His HOLY SPIRIT, unto them that ask HIM? When we read of any true servant of God, be assured we may be like him, we may obtain what he has, if we strive. The love

of St. John, the zeal of St. Peter, the over-flowing self-devotion of St. Paul, the penitence of David, the patience of Job, the intercessions of Samuel, the faith of Abraham—any share of these any one of us may obtain from God, if we use sufficient labours, and pains, and prayers: and when we see any of these things in others, well, indeed, may we earnestly covet and desire the same. And if we do indeed desire them as we should, we shall leave no room in our hearts for earthly objects. For how are we to be so dead to this world as to covet none of its objects, which God bestows as HE wills around us, to wish for neither house, nor wife, nor goods which are given to another? Surely there is but one way in which this can be done,—by being content to have God for our portion, in having all our rest and satisfaction in HIM. As is so often expressed by the Psalmist, “The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance, and my cup.” “Whom have I in Heaven but THEE? and there is nothing upon earth that I desire in comparison of THEE.” Words such as these we have need to be constantly repeating: yet it is not in words only, however frequently repeated, but the whole life of a good man must speak this language. Wherever the heart is most of all emptied out, there CHRIST most of all comes in His fulness: and therefore it was so much the custom in the early Church for men to give up all that they had, in order that their heart might have nothing to take hold of; that by their being thus prepared, CHRIST might come to be their guest, and fill them with His treasures. When men would receive a great earthly guest, they bring all their riches about them, and make a great show of their abundance; but in order to receive HIM Who emptied HIMSELF of His unspeakable glories, and for our sake became poor, we must begin by showing that we are becoming empty and poor, with no earthly objects or honours, and no desire to obtain them. For the hungry HE fills with good things, not the rich: they that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled.

For this reason we may observe that our LORD sets before us two points, in language equally strong and forcible; the one is the absolute necessity of our being perfectly free from care, desire, or covetousness, with regard to any thing whatever in this world; and the other the inconceivable importance of our whole heart,

and time, and strength being devoted to purify ourselves and please God.

All the objects and pursuits of the men of this world are taken by the HOLY GHOST as figures, to explain to us that all our ambition, all our covetousness, all our care, all our pleasure, must be turned to those great things which faith hath opened to us. Our mortal state is described as being to the Christian as much a matter of care and business as it can be to men of this world : it is called laying up treasure, looking for payment, labouring at a plough so earnestly as not once to look back ; running in a race and outstripping others, as knowing that one only receives the prize ; walking in a narrow and difficult way ; laying out our MASTER'S money at interest, and endeavouring to obtain as much as possible for it ; labouring with watchfulness, like a servant who expects his master, while his fellow-servants are playing or quarrelling ; travelling on a journey with an adversary whom we must get rid of ; cultivating a piece of land of which the harvest is to be our eternal portion.

Now all these descriptions taken from the affairs of this life must surely serve to show us that we have a work to do, as thoroughly and entirely as the children of this world have in their generation ; and this work is to root out every thing from the heart but the love of God and our neighbour ; to love God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind, and all our strength : and he who does in earnest strive to do this, will find in his heart no room for any thing else. Blessed is he who so strictly examines himself, and so bewails and laments himself daily, as to cut off every desire upon earth but that of pleasing God in all things, at all times, and in all places.

END OF VOL. IX.

PLAIN SERMONS,

BY

CONTRIBUTORS

TO THE

“TRACTS FOR THE TIMES.”

“We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

“For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.”—2 Cor. xiii. 8, 9.

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